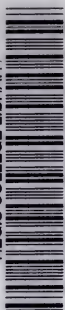


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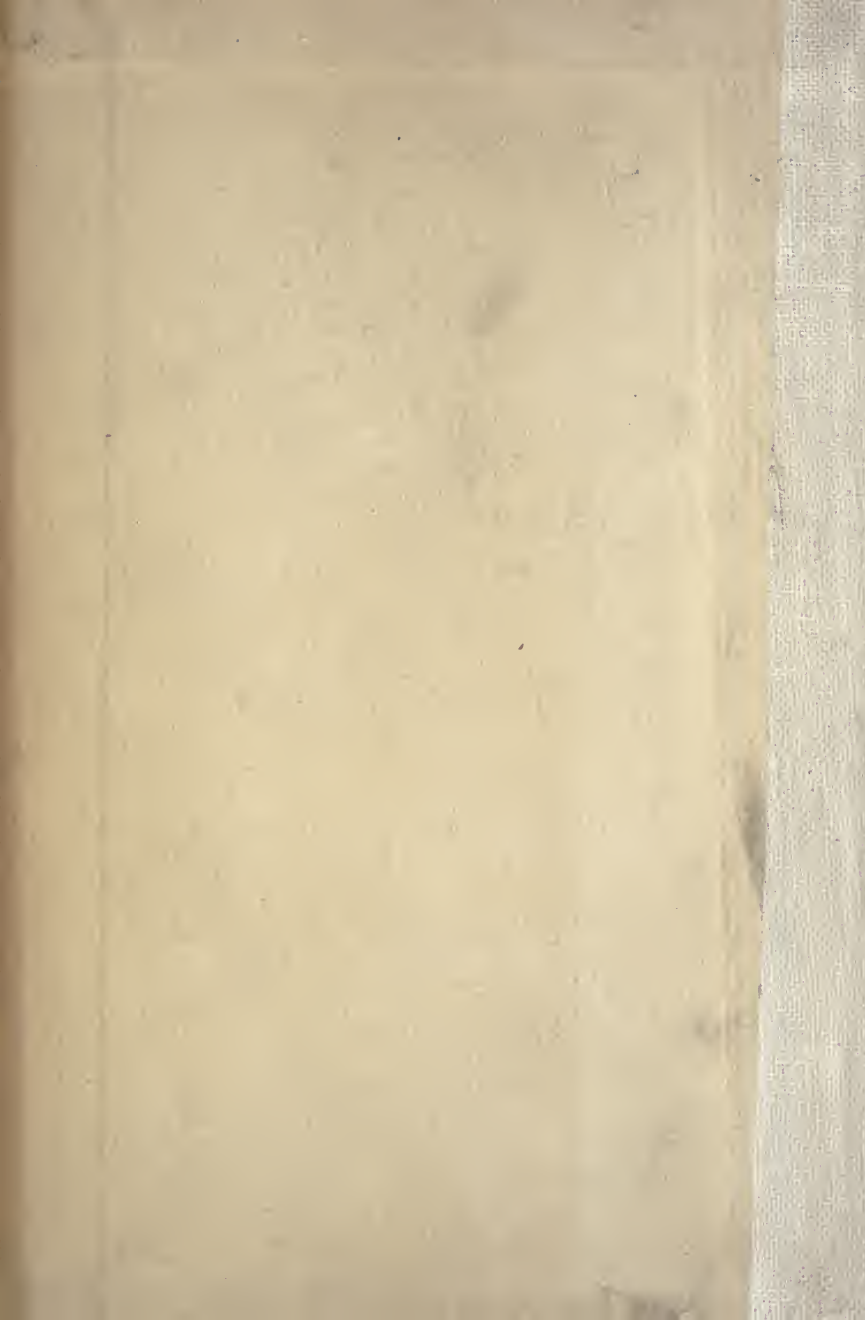


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SPIRITUAL EXERCISES.

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THE WAY
OF
RELIGIOUS PERFECTION
IN THE
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

OF
St. Ignatius of Loyola

OR
MEDITATIONS AND LECTURES FOR A RETREAT OF EIGHT OR TEN DAYS
FOR THE MEMBERS OF RELIGIOUS ORDERS.

BY THE
REV. JOHN CURTIS
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

DUBLIN
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P R E F A C E.

THE contents of the following pages have been for the most part written many years. They have formed the matter proposed by the writer for the consideration of the various religious communities by whom he has been invited to direct their annual retreats, and in several of those communities transcripts more or less imperfect may be found. It is now thought desirable to publish them in a correct form, with some additions, which it is hoped may prove useful. These additions consist principally of four lectures on leading points of spiritual life: 1. The Spirit of the Religious State; 2. On Self-denial or Mortification; 3. On the virtue of Humility; 4. On Prayer, especially Mental Prayer.

With regard to the first, it would seem to be very desirable and useful, if not altogether necessary, at the present time, to renew in the minds of religious persons, during the days devoted to spiritual renovation, a vivid

recollection of the first and essential principles which should never cease to guide and rule them in their holy and important state of life. The duties which such persons are at present called on to discharge are so varied, and they demand, with respect to religious discipline, so great a departure from the strict and cloistral observances usual in the early religious orders of the Church, that there seems to exist some reason to fear relaxation in the essential spirit of the state. The changes alluded to are wise and unavoidable, and are also in general authorized and sanctioned by ecelesiastical authority; but yet they require to be vigilantly and narrowly watched, lest they should cause any diminution in the spirit which belongs to the religious profession. Were this unhappily to take place, the exercise of zeal and charity by the members of religious orders would become a source of evil, and those virtues which are intended to promote their greater perfection would be converted into a cause of perversion and decay.

2. One of the principal changes which has been observed in the discipline of religious orders in modern times relates to the relaxation of penitential rigour and austerity of life; and it will form the subject of the second lecture. It seems necessary not only to show that such relaxation can be effected without injury, and can be reconciled to the highest perfection of virtue, but also to demonstrate that

the change can be wrought in a manner perfectly practical, systematic, and salutary in every respect.

3. The virtue of humility will constitute the subject of the third lecture. It is universally admitted by spiritual writers to be the source or fountain of all other Christian virtues ; but the views taken of it by holy men are so varied, and the manner of treating of it has been so diffuse, that a compendious instruction on the subject, at once practical and easily comprehensible by all minds, seems desirable in the present volume.

4. The object of the lecture on prayer is not to present a comprehensive view of that important subject, on which all religious persons must be supposed to be adequately instructed in general, but to point out, in the first place, how some serious defects in the exercise of prayer may be corrected or avoided, in a manner suggested by the saints, and yet more particularly to remove a very common error regarding the systems of two of the most approved teachers of this heavenly science. These teachers are St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Teresa, whose systems of prayer have been held erroneously by many to be inconsistent with each other ; and it is of great importance to prove that this is far from being the case. They are, on the contrary, to a great extent identical in substance, and when they are united, as they may be, they tend to elucidate, confirm, and perfect each other.

It has been thought advisable to accommodate the exercises in this volume to a retreat of ten days; those persons, however, who prefer the more general term of eight days, may find it useful to read the meditations, which they omit as a part of their daily spiritual lecture.

BRIEF ADMONITIONS FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES.

It is of importance to comprehend well the nature and scope of the exercises. A more perfect idea cannot be conveyed regarding this point than that expressed in the title prefixed to them by their holy inventor. He terms them "Certain spiritual exercises, by which a man is directed in the manner of overcoming himself, in order that, with a mind free from vicious propensities, he may determine his future course of life and conduct." It should, therefore, be constantly kept in view by those who engage in the sacred exercises, that their study must be to overcome themselves, with their passions and evil inclinations, and that their meditations, prayers, &c., are all to be employed to obtain light and resolution from above for that purpose.

The principal exercises of the retreat consist in the Meditations, Examens, and Considerations; the other observances generally are intended to promote and secure the effects of these.

It is of the utmost importance also to devote scrupulously the full time appointed to all the exercises, and to observe with exactness every thing prescribed. A defect in the requisite exactness would deprive the retreat of much

of its effect. The particular examen during it is made on this point.

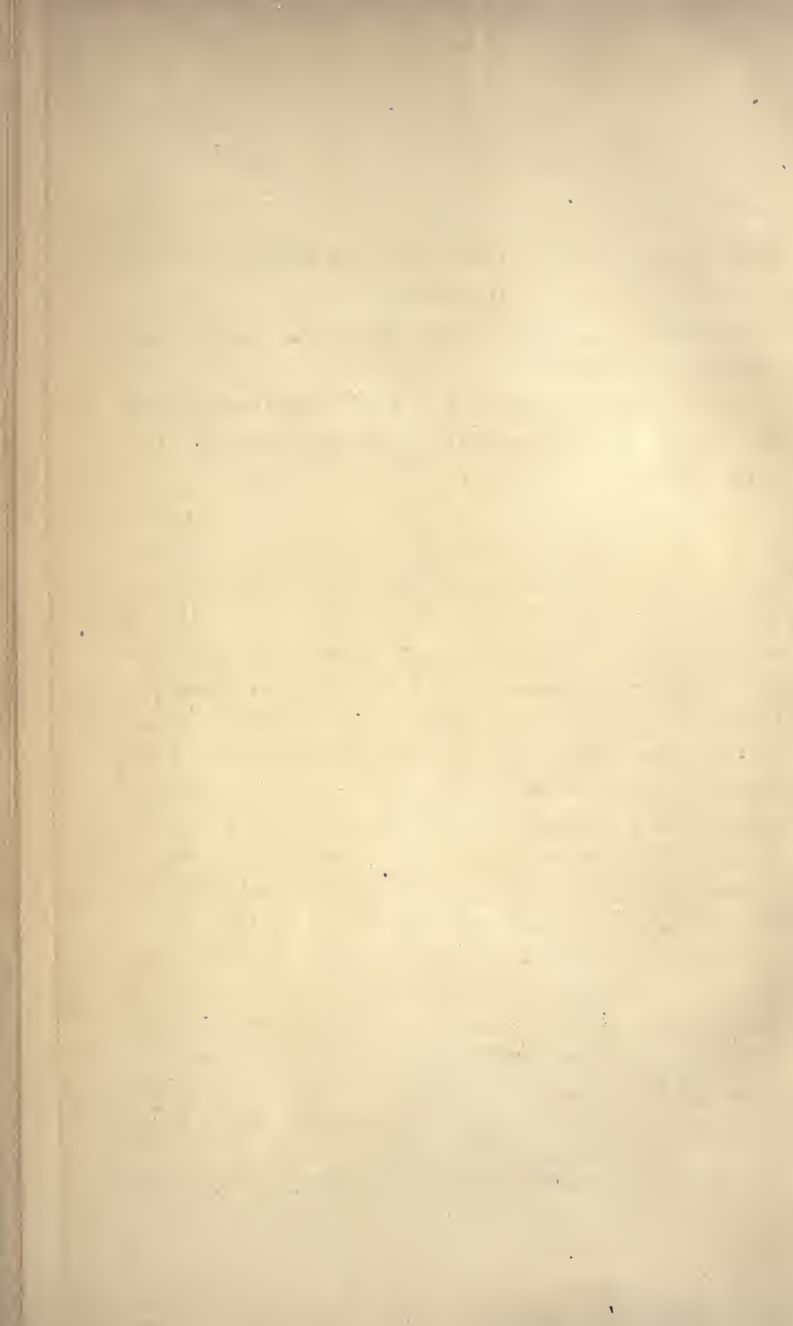
Another matter of importance is to endeavour to preserve during each day the effect produced on the mind by the particular exercises of that day. For this purpose the reading should correspond with the subject of the meditations; and all reflections, however pious, should be avoided, if they be contrary to the affection sought to be produced in the soul. For instance, if the object be to produce the holy fear of God, all reflections on heaven and subjects of a joyful nature would be injurious, and the contrary.

The examen of the interior on the first day of the exercises should turn on the present state of the soul in general, or on its progress, in order to discover what defects chiefly demand correction, or what virtues are most wanting. It is a practice much recommended to select for the fruit to be sought in the retreat some particular grace, such as the correction of a predominant fault, the acquisition of some desirable virtue, or a conquest over ourselves on some point in which we are conscious that our conduct is not in conformity with the Divine will. If in each retreat we could thus obtain some victory over ourselves, we should advance more steadily in virtue.

It is also recommended to note down at the conclusion the principal resolutions made during the retreat, with the divine inspirations received, in order that they may serve on future occasions to renew fervour.

During the first part of the exercises, the object in view is to purify the soul, and seek by all means compunction

of heart and a horror of every sin ; and all efforts should be made to promote this effect. During this part, those who are anxious to succeed will find it extremely useful to mortify carefully their senses and imagination, and to centre their thoughts, as it were, within their own breasts. It will aid for this purpose to remain in obscurity, as far as convenience may permit ; and for this end to close partially the shutters of the windows or cells. External things of this kind have a great effect on the mind.



PREPARATION OF THE SOUL BEFORE MENTAL PRAYER.

“Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God.”*

“The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds . . . and he shall not depart until the Most High behold.”†

My God, I firmly believe that Thou art here present: that in Thee I live, move, and exist, and that Thou hast a perfect knowledge of all that passes in my soul. Heaven and earth are as nothing before Thee, and disappear before thy Majesty. Whither shall I fly, O Lord! from the terrific splendour of thy countenance? I will take refuge in the deepest abysses of my own unworthiness. I am before Thee as a worm, a grain of dust, or an atom; of myself I am nothing, and the being which Thou hast given has been abused by me in the commission of sin, an infinite evil in thy sight. “From the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord! Lord, hear my voice: Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.”‡ “Have mercy upon me according to thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquities. Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin, because I know my iniquity and my sins are always before me.”§ In Thee, O Lord! have I hoped,

* Ecclus. xviii. 23. † Ibid. xxxv. 21. ‡ Ps. cxxix. 1. § Ibid. l. 3, 4, 5.

let me never be confounded. "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed. Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow."

Enlighten my understanding, O Lord! and inflame my will, that I may perform this sacred duty with attention and devotion.

Virgin Mother of my Redeemer, Mother of mercy, St. Joseph and all my holy patrons, all you saints of God, obtain for me the grace of true devotion.

* Ps. l. 9.

Spiritual Exercises.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES.

First Day.

PRELIMINARY MEDITATION.

1 *Point.* This retreat most necessary.

2 *Point.* This retreat most salutary.

3 *Point.* This retreat most desirable.

Preparatory Prayer.

My God, I firmly believe that Thou art here present, that in Thee I live, move, and exist, and that Thou hast a perfect knowledge of all that passes in my soul. Heaven and earth are as nothing before Thee, and disappear before thy majesty. Whither shall I fly, O Lord, from the terrific splendour of thy countenance? I will take refuge in the deepest abysses of my own unworthiness. I am before Thee as a worm, a grain of dust, or an atom: of myself I am nothing, and the being which Thou hast given has been abused by me in the commission of sin, an infinite evil in thy sight. "From the depths I have cried to thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.* "Have mercy upon me according to thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity. Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse

* Ps. cxxix. 1, 2.

me from my sin, because I know my iniquity and my sin is always before me." In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded. "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed: Thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow."*

1 *Prelude*. Imagine yourself on the holy mount in converse with God alone, or in the desert with Jesus Christ.

2 *Prelude*. Beg grace to perform this retreat with fervour and diligence, and to draw from it suitable fruit.

1 *Point*. This retreat most necessary.—If I compare the state of my soul at present with that in which it was placed at my entrance into religion, or with that which existed in those days of my religious life, when I lived in greater fervour, the necessity of this retreat will be sufficiently apparent. Whither is departed that spirit of compunction and penance? Where is now that delicacy of conscience, that purity of heart and mind, that attention to the smallest rules, that filial dread of offending God? Whither have departed that sweet peace and joy of the soul, that undisturbed recollection in prayer, that love for spiritual exercises, that spirit of charity and zeal, that continual turning of the mind to God, those fervent aspirations of love? How have they disappeared? How much reason have I to cry out with holy David: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit."†

The necessity will be yet more evident if I look upon the lives of those religious who possessed the spirit of

* Ps. l. 5, 9.

† Ps. l. 14.

their holy state, and of whom I have heard or read. In them, what holy fear, what arduous penance, what unremitting fervour! In me, what insensibility, what false security, what indolence and self-indulgence! And which is the road to heaven?—that narrow path, in which they walked, or that into which I have been led by sloth and self-love? “How narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leadeth to life!”* . . . How much is here to be reformed and changed! Is my soul at this moment in that state in which I should desire to be found at the hour of death or when summoned before my Judge? What fruit have I derived from all his graces, all his talents! How have they been dissipated! How have they been buried or perverted! Alas! not one retreat, but a long course of fervour would seem to be necessary for me.

2 Point. This retreat most salutary—“Behold, now is the acceptable time . . . now is the day of salvation.”† The invincible efficacy of the spiritual exercises of the retreat in changing the heart and remedying every spiritual evil has been attested by innumerable authorities, the respectability of which cannot be questioned. Sinners the most abandoned and inveterate have found in them the source of their conversion, and saints have drawn from them vigour for advancing to new heights of perfection. Tepid religious have made by them the first step towards exalted sanctity; and relaxed communities have been reclaimed by them to exact observance, and excited to renovated fervour. And shall I be numbered amongst

* Matt. vii. 14.

† 2 Cor. vi. 2.

those who pass through them without amendment? If so, it can be owing merely to my own deliberate perversity and neglect. Yes, however cold I may have hitherto been; however devoid of the spirit of my holy state; into whatever depths I may have sunk of tepidity or sloth, if I but perform these sacred exercises with diligence and fervour, I am certain of being reclaimed. I may, if I please, have to date from them the commencement of sanctity, perhaps of salvation. "This day is salvation come to this house."* Now can I repair and atone for the past. Now can I allay the alarms of a troubled, anxious conscience. Now can I look forward and arm myself against those dangers which have originated my past errors. How truly, then, can I say to my soul: "Behold, now is the day of salvation."† Or, rather, it is the Divine Spirit which whispers it within me. But let me beware how I abuse the gift. It may be that decisive grace to which my salvation is attached. I must, at least, admit that should I despise and fling back the present favour offered me by heaven, my condemnation can be attributed only to myself, if I should be abandoned by efficacious grace.

3 *Point.* This retreat most desirable.—"Who will grant me that I might be according to the months past, according to the days in which God kept me? when his lamp shined over my head?"‡ Were the sole object of this retreat to restore to me that sweet peace of mind, that repose which the soul feels then only when it is conscious of performing every duty with integrity, and con-

* Luke, xix. 9.

† 2 Cor. vi. 2.

‡ Job, xxix. 2.

sequently of enjoying the favour of God, it should be sufficient to make me desire it with ardour. But if I have not fallen into a state of indifference and insensibility truly alarming, there are motives of incomparably greater weight. Instead of that inviolable fidelity promised at my first religious engagements, and those steady advances towards perfection which I then resolved, my career has, perhaps, been long a tissue of imperfection, tepidity, and sloth; and now, in place of that lofty height of perfection which I might have reached, that glory which I might have given to God, those souls I might have saved, I find myself an object of disedification, and have placed in jeopardy my eternal salvation. Let me, then, employ these few days to advantage, they may secure my eternity. Let me seriously, fervently, devote a few days to my soul. Yes, my God, in the sincerity of a contrite heart, I say: "My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready!"*

Colloquy to the Divine Spirit.—Divine Spirit of God, source of wisdom, fortitude, and all virtue, who dost communicate to the minds of men the light of heaven, I invoke Thee, and implore thy aid during these days of salvation granted to me in this retreat. Dispel the darkness of my intellect, and correct the perversity of my will, that I may perceive and deplore the errors of my past conduct, and adopt efficacious means to avoid and repair them. Perfectly purify my soul from sin and all affection to it: grant me the spirit of penance to atone for it in the most effectual manner, for in this will be found the best security against returning to it. Give me an ardent love of

* Ps. cvii. 2.

virtue and a desire to acquire it in a high degree, that I may learn to love Thee, O God of infinite perfection, and to glorify Thee in that exalted state of life to which Thou hast called me. Let not these days pass without securing for me the perfect pardon of all my sins, and discovering to me the cause of all past transgressions, that I may avoid them. Oh! Divine Source of every grace, let not thy predilection in calling me to the state of religion prove to me a cause of danger rather than of superior virtue: let these days be to my soul days, indeed, of salvation, and to Thee, O Lord, a commencement of greater glory from thy unworthy servant! Amen. "Come, O holy Ghost," &c. &c.

Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin.—Oh! Immaculate Virgin, Mother of the Redeemer and mystical parent of his entire Church, I desire to place myself during this retreat in a special manner under thy protection. Obtain for me by thy intercession that it may prove to me a means for obtaining many efficacious graces, and that I may faithfully correspond with them. Let it be for me a cause of great advancement in all virtues, especially in those which I most need, and obtain for me that it may prove to me the pledge of a happy death. "Salve Regina," &c.

Address colloquies also to St. Joseph and your other saintly patrons, and implore their intercession often during this important time.

EXAMEN OF THE INTERIOR.

The examen of the interior is of great importance. It is distinguished from the ordinary examens of conscience in this respect, that they relate to acts and habits both

internal and external, whereas the examen of the interior regards more the inclinations, passions, principles of action, and desires which engender, prompt, and stimulate the acts in the soul. These are, as it were, the roots from which both good and evil actions and habits originate and proceed. They are also the cause of temptations in general, both from their own nature and power, and because the enemy of souls, having a great knowledge of the natural temperament and the interior generally of each individual, is guided by this knowledge in presenting such temptations as are most calculated to influence the soul in its actual state. To know our interior is to know ourselves, and it is a knowledge that few possess. Men in general live and die in a state of great self-delusion. Of the importance and value of the interior examen more need not be said.

INTERIOR EXAMEN ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE SOUL.

My soul, what is thy present state with regard to God and your state of life? Is it satisfactory or otherwise? This is an important question at the outset of your retreat: the answer should guide you regarding the objects that you should keep principally in view. Since your last retreat have you progressed in virtue? Progress there must have been, or else a decrease in or a departure from virtue, as in spiritual life to remain stationary is impossible. Examine yourself on the following points: a rigid scrutiny is here required, not many words:—

1. Since your last retreat have you acquired any particular virtue, and which is it?

2. Have you eradicated or diminished any imperfect habit, and what?

3. Has your desire of perfect virtue increased, or has it become cold or tepid?

4. Have you become more attached to your holy state?

5. Have you increased in your union with God?

Search into all defects, and determine what you should demand most of God.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The End of Man's Creation.

1 *Point*. Man has been created for God's glory.

2 *Point*. Man has been created for his own happiness.

3 *Point*. All other things on earth have been created for man to promote this twofold end.

Preparatory Prayer: My God, &c.

1 *Prelude*. Retire with your Redeemer to the desert, and observe Him in communion with his Eternal Father.

2 *Prelude*. Pray: "Oh, Lord, make me know my end . . . that I may know what is wanting to me."*

1 *Point*. Man created for God's glory. If now in solitude, and with a mind free from vain external things, I demand of myself whence have I come, how have I received my existence?—a few years past I was nothing. The answer I learn from holy Job, when addressing God: "Thy hands have made me."† All, then, that I am I hold from God: this body with its members, with all its wondrous arrangement; my soul, with all its natural beauty and perfection, kindred as it is to angelic excellence, and

* Ps. xxxviii. 5.

† Job, i. 8.

formed to the image of the Creator. Almighty power has been exerted at my birth: infinite wisdom was required to constitute me what I am. Then I belong to God: every power and fibre of my mind and body are his by the most inviolable titles. Then every thought, word, and action of my life should be consecrated to his service and homage. Why have I been formed by God, and formed so perfect? His Divine Spirit instructs me through the prophet: "For my glory I have created him."* When I look around me over the visible creation, I find that man alone, amidst all that I behold, is possessed of a rational soul and is capable of knowing or doing homage to his Creator. I am, then, as the high priest of this lower world, to transmit to heaven the homage of irrational and inanimate beings, and to proclaim for them the glory of their Maker. This is my office here, and its effects extend throughout eternity. How exalted an end! How holy, how awful a destiny! And how have I hitherto been employed? Alas! what infidelity! what trifling! what stupid insensibility! How fervently should I pray: "Oh! Lord, make known to me my end, that I may know what is wanting to me!"

2 *Point.* Man created for his own eternal felicity.—The Creator might demand our service without reward. He has not done so: He has promised to those who serve Him eternal life and glory; and in such a manner has his infinite bounty connected his own glory and my salvation, that by the same line of conduct I promote both, and I cannot neglect the one without forfeiting the other. What

* Isai. xliii. 7.

is salvation? It is to dwell, to reign for ever with God. It is to possess God; to participate in that felicity which He derives from the possession of his own infinite perfections. "Fear not, Abram: I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great."* For this have I been created. Then why attach myself to the earth, and endanger the possession of heaven? "You cannot revel in earthly joys, and afterwards reign with Christ."† Let me compare and form in time a wise election. The goods of heaven are infinite, those of earth are limited and vain. The joys of heaven fill the whole soul; those of earth can never satisfy, and are accompanied with much pain. The felicity of heaven is eternal: once possessed, it can never be lost; that of earth is transient, and never is secure for an hour. Which, then, should I seek? Which have I sought? Ponder these eternally true and penetrating words: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"‡

3 *Point.* All things on earth created to assist man in attaining to his end. All things have been made for the glory of the Creator. But irrational and inanimate creatures cannot glorify Him of themselves; they know Him not: they serve, then, as instruments to intelligent beings, by the use of which they may give homage to God: this is their true, their only utility. I have, then, been guilty of a crime against the order of the universe in perverting the use of creatures and seeking enjoyment in them. I have been guilty of a rapine on the Creator, by robbing Him of that glory which He would

* Gen. xv. 1.

† Imit. of Christ.

‡ Matt. xvi. 26.

have derived from his creatures had I not abused them; nay, more, I have converted them into instruments of offence and dishonour against Him; I have made them a species of deities, and squandered on them those affections of my exalted soul which were due to the Creator alone. Gold is the idol of the miser, and so of other creatures. We are astonished at the stupidity of idolators in paying adoration to idols, and we forget that whenever we prefer the creature to God, we are guilty of a similar enormity. The day will come when creatures will rise to avenge the injuries done to Him who made them. “He will arm the creature for the revenge of his enemies.”*

Implore light and wisdom at the feet of your Creator.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—Oh! Eternal Creator and source of being, who hast made man a little less than the angel, and destined those that serve Thee to everlasting glory and felicity. I adore Thee with all my powers and affections for thy infinite benignity. Thou art truly the parent of all intellectual creatures. Thou hast loved them with an eternal love in forming them. Thou hast sought their good, their felicity, and their glory together with thy own. Thou hast loved them with a truly paternal love, and Thou hast sought thy own accidental felicity and glory in communicating to them a rich participation in thy beatitude. All this Thou hast done without any merit on their part, and without the possibility of any adequate return. Oh! elevate our minds to comprehend the riches of thy beneficence and goodness. Raise our thoughts and affections above the low and corrupt

* Wisd. v. 18.

world that surrounds us, and enable us to know what it is to participate in thy beatitude. Let us know and feel the sublime and ineffable privilege to be thy children—children of the king of heaven; and teach us ever to rejoice and glory in the high thoughts of the sons of God. Above all, O Lord, make us thy faithful servants; enable us to live for thy glory on earth, according to thy divine will, that we may not be found unworthy of that rich reward which is nothing else but thy divine self. Withdraw our hearts from the love of thy gifts, and do not allow us to prefer them to Thee, the source and cause of every good. Let us not be guilty of such dire ingratitude. Teach us to despise and undervalue all that is not Thee, that we may love and enjoy Thee, our true and only end, throughout eternity. “Accept, O Lord, my liberty without reserve, my memory, my understanding, and my will. Whatever I am or possess I have received from Thee: to Thee I restore it all, to be ruled by thy Divine Will. Thy love alone and grace bestow upon me, and I am rich enough: nothing more do I demand at thy hands.” “Our Father,” &c.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION

On the Dispositions for the due performance of the Retreat.

1 *Point.* Dispositions regarding the interior.

2 *Point.* Dispositions and observances which regard the exterior. Pray for the success of your retreat.

1 *Point.* The interior dispositions.—The success of every spiritual exercise depends much on the dispositions with which it is performed. Consider, religious soul,

whether you possess the dispositions required in order to draw fruit from this retreat. 1. Examine whether you are inspired with that fervour and alacrity to correspond with grace, without which it only tends to our condemnation. It is one of the first principles of spiritual life that the grace of the Divine Spirit admits not of sluggish indolence. Consider that these days are but few, and resolve to devote them totally to God and to your soul. Excite your sloth at least now: fervour will render the effort easy. "We have given years to the care of our bodies," observes a spiritual writer, "let us devote a few days to our souls!" 2. Do you possess courage to overcome the obstacles raised by your spiritual enemies? God requires great resolution. "If thy right eye scandalise thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish rather than that thy whole body be cast into hell."* 3. Are you animated with great confidence in God and generosity towards Him? Why should you fear to follow God? "God is faithful: by whom you are called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."† Can He lead you to aught but virtue and happiness? Or can He abandon you if you be faithful to Him? 4. Are you filled with an ardent desire and serious determination to obtain abundant fruit? You should feel as if convinced that the success of your course through life—heaven, hell, your own salvation, and that of many others—depend on this retreat. When will you secure all if not now? Who is he that will dare to engage in this work of God for form's sake, or merely

* Matt. v. 29.

† 1 Cor. i. 9.

because others do so, and that custom requires it? 5. Are you armed with vigilance against your own frailty? What has been the cause of your past failure or deficient progress in the service of God? Beware now of your own weakness and the many destructive snares of the enemy. Choose patrons for the retreat, and frequently and fervently implore their intercession.

2 *Point*. The dispositions and observances which regard the exterior.—The importance of them is such that no solid fruit is to be hoped for without them. In the first place, secure perfect solitude, as far as it can be obtained: you must endeavour to forget that any being exists but God and your soul. It is in solitude that the Divine Spirit speaks to the heart. “I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart.”* 2. To obtain this solitude strict silence must be observed. You must endeavour, as far as possible during these days, to speak to God alone. 3. Custody of the eyes and the suppression of curiosity must be observed with equal care. In vain will you seek solitude if you permit your eyes to wander on various objects: in that case many dangerous or distracting images will be sure to invade the soul. 4. You must observe scrupulous exactness in performing every exercise; you must attend to the proper hour, place, and posture; the utmost care will be required in preparing for the meditations, and in reflecting on the subjects of them when retiring to rest and rising. 5. Care should be taken to preserve the impressions made by the meditations on the mind from one exercise to another, and the subject of the

* Osee, ii. 14.

spiritual lecture should correspond more or less with them. If the object of the meditation of the day be to create in the soul the holy fear of God or the spirit of compunction and penance, a lecture on any subject calculated to excite spiritual joy would diminish or totally destroy the effect.

6. A spirit of penance and a desire to atone for past sins, as well as to prevent sin in future, and to advance in virtue, belong essentially to the necessary dispositions for the retreat. Hence some amount of corporal austerities will be required when debility or delicacy of health do not prevent them. In all such things, however, religious persons should be guided by their superiors or directors, and undertake nothing without their knowledge and sanction. The following remarks of St. Ignatius of Loyola on this point are valuable and meritorious of profound consideration. External penance or austerity are useful for three ends in particular, and produce three principal effects. They serve, in the first place, to atone for past sins; they enable the individual to conquer himself and to subject his inferior appetites to the superior and the dominion of reason; and, lastly, they serve to obtain for us the gifts of divine grace which we need or desire. They obtain profound contrition for our sins, the gift of tears, the solution of the doubts of a troubled conscience, and other spiritual or even temporal favours. Meditate profoundly on all these dispositions, and determine that no deliberate defect or neglect on your part shall defeat the great object of your retreat. Resolve so to regulate all things from the commencement that no obstacle may arise. Let no portion of the precious fruit of your retreat be lost.

“Defraud not thyself of the good day, and let not the

part of a good gift overpass thee.”* Reflect on the value of grace, the difficulty of the combat, the rich rewards of victory, the dread danger of defeat. Lay your resolutions at the feet of God.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the End of the Religious Soul.

The person who is engaged in the religious state of life cannot learn fully what is wanting to him by merely meditating on the end of man's creation. He also must consider what is required by his peculiar vocation.

1 *Point.* The religious is destined to serve God in greater perfection than other Christians.

2 *Point.* The religious is destined to imitate Christ more closely.

3 *Point.* The religious is destined to obtain higher rewards.

Preparatory Prayer : My God, &c.

1. *Prelude.* Unite yourself in spirit to the apostles when instructed by our Redeemer.

2 *Prelude.* Renew the prayer, “O Lord, make me know my end, that I may know what is wanting to me.”†

1 *Point.* The religious is destined to serve God in greater perfection than the ordinary Christian, and, consequently, to promote the glory of God in a higher degree.

1. “He hath made me as a chosen arrow,” says the prophet, “in his quiver He hath hidden me.”‡ Before I could merit He destined me to this. God has attached the salvation of ordinary Christians to the observance of the commandments, but the salvation of the religious to the

* Ecclus. xiv. 14.

† Ps. xxxviii. 5.

‡ Isai. xlix. 2.

study of perfect virtue. Such is the consequence of my engagement by my vows. If the religious soul should aim no higher than to keep the commandments by avoiding mortal sin, it must be lost for ever. Such is the general opinion of theologians. God has a right to demand of every Christian the homage of every thought, word, and action. He then demands of the religious more holy thoughts, more prudent, salutary words, more perfect actions; a homage more exalted, service purer and more refined. As choir surpasses choir among the angels, so should religious rise above ordinary men. If then it is required of every Christian to deny himself, to take up his cross, to leave all, how detached from creatures, how devoted to God should be the religious! Such is the state to which, in the eternal decrees of God, I have been destined.

2 *Point*. The religious is bound to imitate Christ more closely. Every Christian is called to imitate our Redeemer. Without a resemblance to Him none can be saved. "For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son."* The religious must study a close imitation. To him are addressed, in a peculiar manner, the divine words "Follow me."† He must live as the intimate friend and brother of his Lord. "I will not now call you servants, . . . but I have called you friends."‡ Such were the words of our Lord to those who were to be the models of religious souls. Ordinary Christians imitate Jesus Christ by avoiding great sins. The religious must do so by shunning the smallest faults,

* 1 Rom. viii. 29.

† Matt. viii. 22.

‡ John, xv. 15.

and ever seeking greater purity of conscience. Ordinary Christians imitate Him by the exercise of ordinary virtue, by steadfast faith, by constant hope, by universal charity. The virtue of the religious must tend to what is more exalted. His faith should be more firm, lively, and active; his hope should tend to magnanimity, and impel him to undertake arduous things for God; his charity should be refined into an indefatigable zeal for souls. The ordinary Christian walks in the footsteps of the Redeemer by patient submission to the trials, the sufferings, the humiliations which cross his path in life. The religious should therefore seek to love the cross. He must aim at that perfect virtue which embraces sufferings with ardour, and rejoices to suffer "reproach for the name of Jesus."* You are to be a "man of God," completely devoted to Him and to his glory. What predilection does not this suppose! What boundless gratitude does it not call for! What lofty aims! What elevated thoughts! the thoughts of the sons of God. What exalted and ardent devotion does it not demand! Jesus Christ called his disciples friends and brethren, and not servants.

3 *Point.* The religious is destined to obtain higher rewards. This is a reflection of the deepest interest to the religious soul. If the ordinary Christian observes the commandments, he aspires to heaven as his reward; this is his destined end. The religious who is called to serve God in perfection is consequently destined by Him to higher degrees of glory and felicity: "In my Father's house there are many mansions."† Each takes his degree

* Acts, v. 41.

† John, xiv. 2.

according to his merit: “He will render to each according to his works.”* What treasures of merit, what heights of glory may the religious secure! Every supernatural act of virtue gains a new degree of merit, to which is attached a new degree of glory, high in proportion to the quality and intensity of the act. Calculate then the reward of the fervent religious. His acts of virtue may be constantly increased, reiterated every moment; he has no distractions of the world to turn his mind from God; his virtue is more meritorious, in consequence of his holocaust. When nothing external occurs to be done for God, he can add splendour to his crown by holy desires. To all this I have been destined by God; of all this I may avail myself, if I be but fervent. “Trade till I come,”† our Redeemer inculcates; what folly in me to attend to other objects! Let me then value nothing but what tends to promote the grand, the sublime end proposed to me; this is what is wanting to me. Let not the fervent soul imagine that it is a departure from perfection to serve God for eternal rewards; such an idea implies a tendency to the error of the Quietists, who mistook the nature of celestial beatitude. The felicity of heaven consists in the possession of God Himself, as He declared to Abraham: “I am thy protector and thy reward exceeding great.”‡ To increase, therefore, eternal rewards is to intensify the light of glory, to inflame the soul with more ardent love of God, and to enjoy his perfections to a greater extent for eternity. This is what he seeks in the beatitude of the just. He is their Parent, He loves them with an all-perfect charity,

* Rom. ii. 6.

† Luke, xix. 13.

‡ Gen. xv. 1.

and in the plenitude of their felicity He seeks his own glory and delight.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—My God! Source of every good and all felicity, who seekest thy own glory in the beatitude of thy creatures, illumine my understanding that I may know Thee, and by a more perfect knowledge of Thee, ever become more inflamed with thy love. Give me to comprehend fully the exalted, the priceless privileges of my vocation, which is to serve Thee more perfectly in order that I may love Thee more ardently, and enjoy Thee more fully for eternity. O my God and my Creator, what didst Thou discover in my lowliness and misery to induce Thee to treat me with such predilection, to select me from the crowd of ordinary men, and to number me among thy favourite and chosen servants? Eternal praise and glory be to Thee for thy unmerited goodness! But I am weak, O Lord, and unworthy; I am grovelling in my inclinations, and corrupt in my natural affections and desires. Do Thou illumine my soul with heavenly light, elevate my thoughts, purify my heart and my desires: grant me grace and fortitude to serve Thee with devotion and fidelity.

Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ.—O Divine Lord Jesus Christ! Son of the living God, our Leader, our Head, and King of glory! how shall I attempt to imitate Thee? I am but weakness, I am but corruption; Thou art omnipotence and infinite holiness. Of myself I cannot, but “Thou hast the words of eternal life;”* speak to my soul that omnipotent word that drew light from darkness,

* John, vi. 69.

and called into being all creation ; purify, illumine, exalt, and fortify the powers of my soul ; give, O Lord ! give what Thou dost desire, and my nothingness shall be absorbed and disappear in the light of thy sanctity, power, and perfection. Renew your consecration : “ Accept, O Lord, my liberty without reserve,” &c. &c.

LECTURE

On the Spirit of the Religious State.

Every state of human life, or, to speak more precisely, every profession, may be said to display a spirit peculiar to itself ; and, in general, perhaps success in the profession will be proportionate to the degree in which that spirit prevails in the individual. The spirit of the military man is very different from that which appears in those who are engaged in the legal profession ; the spirits of both are clearly distinguished from that of the medical man and of him who is devoted to commercial pursuits ; and those of the latter are equally foreign to that of the agriculturist. It is clear, moreover, that if the lawyer, in place of adhering to the dry study of his legal tomes, should allow his mind to be amused with the glare of military glory, and engage in tactical speculations for obtaining imaginary victories in the sanguinary field, his clients would run great danger of losing their suits, and the briefs committed to him would become very few. If the physician or the surgeon should neglect the studies peculiar to their profession, and devote their time and attention to the speculations of commerce, it is clear that multiplied deaths among their patients and diminished fees would soon convince them of their error. Moreover, if the commercial man be tempted to engage in agricultural pursuits, and neglects

his counting-house and its concerns, derangement in his affairs, the disappearance of gain, and multiplied losses will ere long be the result ; whereas, if the agriculturist should forget his crops and enter into commercial enterprises, barren fields, weeds, and threatening poverty would soon be the reward of his folly. If all this be true and undeniable with respect to temporal pursuits and the avocations of men in this world, it must be so in a far greater degree as regards spiritual life and the profession and duties of those who are devoted to God, to his divine service, and to the pursuit of all that is connected with eternity and the salvation of souls. Success in temporal matters depends principally on human talent and diligence ; in spiritual concerns it is founded far more on divine grace and aid from above, which cannot be obtained without prayer and devotion, that secure the favour of heaven. Success in religious life is not to be expected unless there be found in the soul that peculiar spirit which belongs to that life. How important, then, must it be to know and comprehend fully the nature of that spirit, to be convinced of its value, to love, desire, and constantly endeavour to possess it in a greater and more perfect degree ? The person who is devoid of the spirit of the worldly profession, or state of life which he has chosen, must suffer a penalty of serious magnitude and universally feared in a high degree. He fails to acquire that affluence and to arrive at that condition of temporal welfare to which all aspire who toil for the goods of this life ; he is defrauded of the fruits of years of labour and anxiety ; and, when worn out with age and infirmity, he and those who may depend upon him are doomed to suffer in a greater or less

degree the evils of penury and destitution. This is a calamity much to be dreaded; yet it is nothing when compared to the danger of failure in religious life, on which depend the goods and evils of eternity, and the salvation or loss of perhaps many souls. There is no favour, therefore, which should be more ardently and constantly implored of God, by those who are called by Him to that peculiar and exalted profession, than the true spirit of their holy state.

The spirit of a state or profession, in general, may be described as consisting of a love or predilection for it, and zeal for its peculiar objects, to the exclusion of all attachment to other pursuits that divert the mind from it and prevent the necessary attention to its avocations. The spirit of the religious state, above all, requires a love and devotion to all that regards religion and spiritual life. As the spirit of the world includes an attachment to the things of this world, the spirit of religious life demands devotion to the things of God, and excludes all concern for what is most valued in this world. This detachment is the first disposition required by our Lord in those whom He desires to be especially devoted to Him, and whom He invites to follow Him. This devotion demands more than the observance of the commandments of God, addressed to every member of the Church. The young man mentioned in the Gospel of St. Matthew, who asks of our Lord, "What good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" declared that he had observed them from his youth; yet more was required of him. Jesus said to him: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow me."*

* Matt. xix. 16, 21.

The special and most prominent marks or features of the true and genuine spirit of religious life may be enumerated as four :—1. The first is that alienation from the world which has been already slightly noticed. 2. The second is a constant devotion to our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, the model of the elect, and a desire to follow Him by the imitation of his virtues. 3. The third will appear in that purification and elevation of the soul which result from those virtues indicated by our Lord in what are usually termed the eight beatitudes. 4. The fourth is that zeal for the divine glory and the salvation of souls which is displayed in the unceasing labours of the members of religious orders.

1. The alienation from the world, which is noted as the first mark of the religious spirit, was required by our Lord to a very rigorous extent. He declared and made known to all that his kingdom was not of this world, and He constantly spoke of it as the “kingdom of heaven.” This name He applied to his entire Church ; and He clearly taught that all his followers were to purify their minds and souls from the spirit and love of the world. There were some, however, among those whom He called that He wished to be especially devoted to Him : He named them his friends and brethren, and distinguished them from his ordinary servants and followers, and, of course, from them He required a greater and more perfect degree of detachment from temporal things. These special favourites He expected to be perfect, as He indicated to the young man, who has been mentioned, “if thou wilt be perfect.” Of him and of all his chosen friends He expected and required that they should not only be detached

in mind and affection from the things of this world, but He enjoined that they should reject them in effect and reality. "Go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have a treasure in heaven, and come follow me."* His words to St. Peter, recorded in the same chapter of St. Matthew, teach the same doctrine in terms yet clearer and more detailed: "And every one that hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold and shall have life everlasting."† It is probable that our Divine Lord had at this moment in mind the formation of a certain band of devoted followers who were to be especially consecrated to his service, who were intended to enjoy a greater share of his confidence, to be more intimately associated with Him, and who were to be his more immediate instruments and assistants in the formation and government of his infant Church. Such a band was actually formed by Him: it was combined principally of his Apostles, with whom were associated his sacred Mother and the holy women who accompanied her from Nazareth, and others who attended on Him even to his crucifixion and death. After his resurrection their number was increased, and they formed the early Church in Jerusalem, where their manner of life was such as has since been imitated in the religious orders of the Church. The words of our Lord on another occasion, when speaking to another individual, demonstrate the perfect and unqualified spirit in which He requires the world to be abandoned by his chosen favourites. In the eighth chapter of St.

* Matt. xix. 21.

† Matt. xix. 29.

Matthew it is stated that “a certain scribe came to Him and said, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go.”* This declaration seemed to indicate a very perfect abandonment of all other persons and things, and a complete devotion to the person of our Divine Lord; but, apparently, to test the sincerity of the speaker, or to present to his mind the full significance of what he had, without solicitation, expressed, “Jesus saith to him, the foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.”† In the Gospel of St. Luke the same fact is related, and it is followed by the statement of two other incidents which indicate, in a far greater degree, the lesson which our Lord desired to impress on the minds of his disciples. “But He said to another: Follow me. And he said: Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. And Jesus said to him: Let the dead bury their dead; but thou go and preach the kingdom of God.”‡ The lesson given to another whom He seems to have called cannot be read without some feeling of awe. “And another said: I will follow Thee, Lord; but let me first take my leave of them that are at my house. Jesus said to him: No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”§ All these sayings of our Divine Teacher should make a deeper impression on the mind, because they were intended by Him to render certain a point which might otherwise appear doubtful. To abandon the world and its possessions, and sever all connection with those whom nature has rendered dear, and bound to us by the ties of kindred, is

* Matt. viii. 19.

† Ibid. viii. 20.

‡ Luke, ix. 59, 60.

§ Luke, xi. 61, 62.

not obligatory on all the followers of Jesus Christ. Those who are called on to do so are comparatively few ; it might, therefore, seem to some that the sacrifices made by those especially invited would not be exacted with any great rigour, but that a good share of indulgence would be extended to those who respond to the special call. That Divine Being, however, who has given so many and such infinite proofs of his love for men, would have us comprehend the ardour of his desire for a return of affection ; He would have us reflect also on the value of the graces that He bestows, and the danger of rejecting or being unfaithful to them. He declares, therefore, that “ He is a jealous God,”* and that He “ hates robbery in a holocaust.”† He will admit of no rival in our hearts ; He looks on as enemies those that do not serve Him, and those that are not for Him He considers as against Him, because He is infinitely just, and He has a right to our whole hearts and our undivided service.

Great as the rigour may appear which is expressed in these words of our Lord, which have been referred to, and complete as the detachment is which they indicate, there are expressions of his yet more imperative, and He would seem to require from his favourite and special followers a degree of detachment from creatures amounting to aversion and hatred. Literally interpreted his words convey that meaning, but yet we can perceive that the hatred of which He speaks is compatible with the truest and most genuine charity and love. “ If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot

* Exod. xx. 5.

† Isai. lxi. 8.

be my disciple.”* “And,” He continues, “whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”† By these words He renders it evident, and gives all to understand clearly that the detachment which He requires is not merely external, but that it extends to the affections of the heart and to the will. He shows by this his perfect knowledge of all the weaknesses of human nature, and that He had present to his divine mind one of the greatest dangers to which his chosen followers to the end of time were to be exposed. It is that of inordinate attachment to those whom they have left in the world, and the natural love of whom they profess to have sacrificed to God. Those relatives, our Lord says, He requires his followers to hate; not that He could ever inculcate any the slightest violation of that charity which He has enjoined as an essential branch of his primary and inviolable law, but to show that He wishes all merely natural affection to be subdued and eradicated from the hearts of his followers, and that they should entertain for their relative no other than that spiritual attachment and love that is perfectly subordinate to the divine law, and which can never interfere with the requirements of the highest virtue or impede the sacrifices which it demands. It is, however, proper to remark here, that the complete detachment from relatives required by our Lord is never to interfere or impede the established order of charity. If parents or relatives be reduced to extreme or severe distress, or destitution, the rules of that charity are to be strictly adhered to.

* Luke, xiv. 26, 27.

† Ibid.

The substance of the lesson to be learned by religious is, that it is not sufficient to be separated merely in person from their relatives, and yet to allow themselves to retain for them those affections which nature and habit render so powerful; should they do so, they will find them continual sources of evil that may effectually prevent the exercise of the virtues required by their consecration to God. They will, in the first place, become continual obstacles to that peace of mind and freedom from worldly solicitude, which is indispensable for undisturbed intercourse with God in prayer, and which forms the most precious portion of the hundred-fold promised by Jesus Christ to those who abandon all to follow Him. Experience proves that, if the affection of religious persons for their relatives induce them to allow of it, their hearts are made receptacles for all the cares, solitudes, and sorrows of their secular connexions. No temporal gain is obtained, no loss is incurred, that they are not expected to participate in the joy, the sorrow, or the disappointment. No scheme or speculation is contemplated for the acquisition of wealth or position, no important undertaking even in trade is entered on without being submitted to their consideration for counsel as well as prayer. No child is settled in life or devoted to a profession, no important contract is formed without their advice; they are called on to think and reflect, to rejoice and to mourn, for every member of their families. It is evident that by this means, those passions which their separation from the world is intended to extinguish or subdue are continually fostered and kept in vigour, and the religious spirit is to the same extent impeded and destroyed. If their time and attention be

not diverted from the duties of their state in life, at least their zeal and solicitude must be distracted from them, and their fidelity to their solemn and sacred engagements must be endangered or violated. Another evil is often the consequences of this disorder, and it serves as a chastisement for it. That welfare of their relatives, which is sought to be promoted by the infidelity of religious persons of which we speak, is sure to be impeded. It cannot be doubted that God, in his infinite benignity and liberality, is accustomed to bless the families of those who consecrate themselves to his service, as a reward to them; by the infidelity alluded to, such blessing is of course averted, and the amount of injury, both temporal and eternal, no created mind can conceive.

Our Divine Lord requires of his favourites not merely to hate the world and their relatives, He requires that they should hate themselves. In this hatred, however, as He explains in the Gospel of St. John, there is implied a heavenly paradox: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal."* The feature of the religious spirit indicated in these divine words is one of the most essential: it is that of self-denial, without which the attainment of high virtue is an utter impossibility. It is not, however, necessary to dilate upon it here at any length, as it will form the subject of a special lecture. It includes an incipient desire or preparation of heart to suffer in the cause of God, and all shall be treated of in the lecture to which allusion has been made.

* John, xii. 25.

2. The next prominent feature of the religious spirit is a close attachment to Jesus Christ, and a desire to follow Him. It is in order that this attachment and desire may be perfectly pure that He requires the hearts of his special favourites and followers to be completely detached from the world, its treasures, its honours, and its enjoyments, as also from self and the indulgence of passion. "No man," He says, "can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will sustain the one and condemn the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon."* Unless our devotion to his service and our love for Himself be perfectly pure, He will not accept them. "Blessed is he," says the truly spiritual writer of the "Imitation of Christ," "who understands what it is to love Jesus and to despise himself for Jesus."† Jesus loves us so ardently and truly, that He cannot be satisfied with a portion of our affections, with a divided heart. "Jesus desires to be loved above all and alone."‡ He will not admit or acknowledge a follower who is not entirely devoted to Him in affection as well as in appearance; He is not to be deceived by the exterior, by a hollow, simulated, or even cold devotion; for we should apply here what has been said of the tepid: "I would that thou wert cold or hot."§ Our Lord has also said: "he that is not with me is against me."|| If, therefore, the religious person truly believes in the Divine Word; if he be indeed convinced of the truth expressed by Jesus Christ, "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away,"¶ how

* Matt. vi. 24.

† Imit. b. 2, c. 7.

‡ Ibid.

§ Apoc. iii. 15.

|| Matt. xii. 30.

¶ Mark, xiii. 31.

solicitous will he not be to discover in his spirit this feature of its genuineness and sincerity, the desire to follow and imitate the Divine Leader whom he professes to serve!

We are led here to inquire what is meant by following Jesus Christ. The signification of these words cannot be precisely the same for Christians of the present day as it was with reference to the first apostles, or to the young man whom our Lord invited to sell his property, to give the amount to the poor, and then to follow Him. He is no longer visibly on earth, and to follow Him in such a manner is an impossibility. The words clearly refer to the imitation of our Redeemer, and they bear a twofold signification. In the first place they indicate that imitation which is the essential mark of all the elect, as we learn from the words of St. Paul to the Romans: "For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son, that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren."* In the second place, they refer to that closer and more perfect imitation demanded of religious persons, who, in addition to the divine law contained in the commandments which are binding on all, assume the obligation of observing what are termed the counsels. In order to realise this perfect imitation, it is necessary first to study and reduce to practice the lessons of high virtue delivered by our Lord. There are no dictates of virtue pronounced by Him, however exalted they may be, which religious persons are not called on to learn and to exercise.

One great motive with the Redeemer in assuming our

* Rom. viii. 29.

lowly nature was that He might become our model, and present in his life the example of that virtue which was necessary to restore to our vitiated and debilitated souls those heavenly and God-like qualities which they had lost. It was with this view that He became poor and destitute of every temporal possession. To Him belonged the treasures both of heaven and earth. He it was who had buried the gold and diamonds in the mine, and the gems in the depths of the ocean; yet for our instruction and encouragement He became "poor, and was in labours from his youth;"* and He could declare of Himself: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."† For our instruction also He would become humble and obedient. He was the Creator and Lord of all things equally with his Eternal Father; yet He chose to exhibit Himself as a servant, and to submit his will on earth not only to that of his saintly parents, but to his iniquitous enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, to infidels, and to his very executioners. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."‡

But where are we to seek that strength and fortitude that may enable us to follow our Divine Model in the exercise of virtues so exalted, and which so far transcend the weakness of our lowly and corrupt nature? We learn from his all sacred words. "As the branch," He says, "cannot bear fruit unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, the

* Ps. lxxxvii. 16.

† Matt. viii. 20.

‡ Philip. ii. 8.

same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing." We abide in Him by love. "As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments you shall abide in my love, as I also have kept my Father's commandments, and do abide in his love. These things have I spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be filled."* The love of Jesus gives to his chosen friends and followers their fortitude in the exercise of virtue and the power to bear fruit; but it also imparts to their life its joy and its charm. How beautifully does this truth correspond with the teaching of the "Imitation of Christ." "A great thing is love; a truly great source of good. It renders light every burden, and removes all that is difficult and painful. It feels no weight, but converts into sweetness all that is bitter and distasteful. The exalted love of Jesus impels his followers to undertake great things and ever to aspire to what is most perfect."† "It is, therefore, superior to all difficulties: it succeeds and triumphs where those who have it not fail and become vanquished."‡

Contemplate the manner in which our Divine Lord returns this love of his chosen followers, though they may not be entirely free from imperfection. Call to mind his ardent affection for St. John, who was distinguished as the "disciple whom Jesus loved," and whom He allowed to recline on his sacred bosom. Consider his words to his apostles when now preparing to depart from them. "You are they who have continued with me in my temptations; and I dispose to you, as the Father has disposed to me, a

* John, xv. 4, 9-11.

† "Imit." b. iii. c. iv. pp. 3, 4.

‡ Ibid.

kingdom.”* He never allows Himself to be outdone in affection. From all these considerations we learn that the spirit of the religious state requires an ardent and faithful love of our Divine Lord, and a constant adherence to Him by the imitation of his virtues.

3. The third prominent mark of that spirit which has been noticed consists in that species of celestial vesture of the soul which is formed by the combination of those virtues which are usually named the eight beatitudes. These virtues formed the subject of the very first lesson addressed to his followers by our Lord at the commencement of his preaching, and, of course, they were intended for the instruction of all the members of his Church. Those, however, who are expected to reduce them most perfectly to practice are assuredly those who are especially consecrated to God and his service, as they are also those who possess the most infallible claim to the celestial rewards of virtue. It will be expedient to make some brief remarks on each.

(1.) The first indicates that contempt for this world and its treasures, which has already been dilated on to a considerable extent: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”† These divine words are usually understood as relating to that virtue which consists in a contempt for riches. Some sacred writers, however, explain them as referring to humility, and a contempt for honour and elevation before men. We shall incur no danger of falling into error if we understand them as applying both to the spirit of poverty and humility which are so closely allied to each other, and which seem ordained

* Luke, xxii. 28, 29.

† Matt. v. 3.

to grow together in the soul. What occurs here to be principally remarked is the peculiarity of expression adopted by our Lord. He does not say, as is usual with Him when speaking of other virtues, that the poor in spirit shall hereafter possess the kingdom of heaven ; He says, “ theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven,” as if He wished to convey that those who possess the spirit of poverty, having paid the price required by Him of the sacrifice of the treasures of this world, have actually acquired a species of property in heaven. He seems to desire that religious souls should feel that they are already as denizens of the kingdom of their heavenly Parent, who merely await the summons to speed to their eternal home.

(2.) The second beatitude promises to the meek the possession of that land indicated in the words of the prophet : “ My people shall sit in the beauty of peace, in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest.”* That land is not to be won by the sword, by contention, or the effusion of human blood ; it has already been secured by the wounds, the death and victory of our Divine Lord Himself : it is to be obtained by us by triumphs over our own passions, by subduing our hearts and reducing them to perfect forbearance and humility. No virtues can be more truly indicative of the religious spirit.

(3.) The third beatitude denotes that penitential spirit which is inseparable from the religious vocation, and which might seem to be almost identical with it : “ Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”† To such mourners is promised not merely that consolation which shall be experienced hereafter, when the just shall be com-

* Isai. xxxii. 18.

† Matt. v. 5.

forted in eternal life: "When God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more,"* but the consolation which even at present is imparted to the truly penitent by the "God of all consolation." How rich and full are the floods of that consolation enjoyed for years by true religious, who are accustomed day after day to deplore their transgressions before the altar, and who are so constantly purified by the blood of the Lamb of God in the holy sacraments of Penance and the blessed Eucharist! How fully the "peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding,"† must be established in their souls!

(4.) The fourth beatitude expresses that love and desire of superior virtue which forms the very source and fountain of the religious vocation: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill."‡ These divine words imply precisely the meaning of those addressed by our Lord to the young man already spoken of, "If thou wilt be perfect." To desire to be perfect and to "hunger and thirst after justice" are one and the same inclination of the mind, except, perhaps, that the latter words seem to imply a persevering desire to advance in virtue, and, consequently, express more accurately the nature of the true religious spirit. Where this celestial appetite exists our Lord promises that it shall be gratified to the fullest extent. How wondrous, then, how admirable and desirable must be the progress of the fervent religious soul, that is each day and each hour replenished with copious draughts of that virtue which issues in celestial streams from the very throne, or rather the heart of God.

* Apoc. xxi. 4.

† Phil. iv. 7.

‡ Matt. v. 6.

Who shall estimate the value of those celestial streams? It can be known only to an infinite mind, because it can be represented only by the price of that adorable blood with which the graces of heaven have been purchased. But how melancholy it is to reflect that many souls in religion lose, to a greater or less extent, the appetite and desire of exalted virtue; that they become indolent in its exercise, cold in praying for it, and fall into the perilous state of tepidity! How much should they not fear the dreadful fate described by our Divine Lord, "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God;"* or that implied in those other penetrating words: "I would that thou wert cold or hot; but because thou art tepid, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth."†

(5.) The fifth beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," is one of the most obvious, as it is one of the most admirable features of religious life, and, of course, one of the most peculiar indications of the religious spirit. Mercy it was that drew down from his throne in heaven the Redeemer of mankind; mercy induced Him to lay aside the glory of the Godhead and assume our lowly mortal nature, that He might suffer and die for us; his "tender mercies are over all his works;"‡ it is becoming, therefore, that those whom He has chosen as his special friends and followers should be distinguished for the exercise of mercy. And so we behold this heavenly virtue exemplified in the Church. The members of religious orders are unceasingly employed in the performance of the works of mercy both spiritual and corporal. They con-

* Luke, ix. 62.

† Apoc. iii. 15, 16.

‡ Ps. cxliv. 9.

tinually labour for the instruction of all classes and the salvation of souls; and there can scarce be named an evil that affects the body which does not receive from the hands of religious either a balm to sooth or a remedy to heal.

(6.) The next beatitude, "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God," belongs also in a very peculiar manner to those who enjoy the security and the spiritual advantages arising from the nature of the religious state. The separation from the world and the absence of its allurements of every kind protect religious souls from innumerable sources of defilement; they deprive also our spiritual enemy of his most destructive weapons and of his most powerful agents for leading religious into sin; thus such persons live, in general, in a species of citadel or fortress in which they are protected against danger. At the same time they possess in far greater abundance and can avail themselves more speedily of the means to purify their souls from those stains which they may have contracted through frailty or want of prudence or fervour. Thus, if they be not truly perverse and disposed to wilful infidelity to their sacred engagements, they may be said to live at all times on the "mountain of God, and to stand in his holy place," and to have the power of "being innocent in hands, and clean of heart,"* according to the language of the prophet. It must be owing to their own deliberate abuse of the priceless advantages they enjoy if they do not obtain in such a degree as is permitted by divine grace the privilege of seeing God in holy prayer promised here by our Lord.

* Ps. xxiii. 3, 4.

(7). The peace-makers named in the seventh beatitude are of two classes; those who reconcile sinners to their offended Creator, or who are employed in the yet more heavenly occupation of preventing sin by imparting religious instruction, and those who endeavour to prevent or heal enmity between their fellow-creatures. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." This exercise of zeal in both branches should ever distinguish religious persons, as it has ever done in the Church, and the reward promised is such as to stimulate it to the highest degree. If any Christians merit the happy title of being children of God, those certainly should be prominent who are consecrated to his love and service as religious are, in a manner so peculiar, and which indicates such mercy on his part.

(8.) "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We have to remark in this the eighth beatitude the same form of expression used by our Lord in the first. He says not that those who suffer for the sake of justice will hereafter enter the kingdom of heaven, but that it is already theirs. The words correspond with those which He spoke to his disciples after his resurrection from the dead. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so enter into his glory?"* Our Lord in his human form entered into the possession of his eternal kingdom through the gate of death, suffered in the cause of justice and mercy; and He did not conceal from his chosen friends and followers, that if they expected to reign with Him they should be content

* Luke, xxiv. 26.

to share his sufferings. This truth has been constantly exemplified in every age of the Church, but it has never been more evident than at the present time. In fact, for the last three hundred years religious have been objects of hatred and persecution to the enemies of the true religion. How consoling for them to reflect that there cannot be a more certain sign of the favour of heaven, if we have any confidence in the words of the Redeemer, with which He concludes his teaching on this subject: "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly, for my sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."*

4. The fourth prominent feature of the religious spirit has been said to consist in a constant zeal for the salvation of souls. No indication of it can be more certain and undeniable. As has been said of the celestial virtue of mercy, zeal for the salvation of the souls of men was the cause of the Redeemer's descent from heaven; or, to speak more precisely, zeal for souls is mercy in its most heavenly and active form. As it was the chief virtue displayed by Jesus Christ, it must also be that which is most essential and indispensable in those whom He has chosen as his favourites and as his agents in the divine work which He came to perform. Religious bodies in the Church have ever laboured side-by-side and in co-operation with those who have discharged the apostolic office of preaching. Their first and most peculiar office is that of prayer, without which preaching must fail of its efficacy. In the earliest ages of the Church the monks and holy solitaries

* Matt. v. 11, 12.

in Egypt and elsewhere gave to the pagans of the time the lesson of which they stood most in need, that of a contempt and hatred of a voluptuous world, that could admit no idea of any good that did not take the form of earthly glory, of gold, or sensual indulgence. In the wilderness, the monastery, and the hermit's solitary hut or cavern, the virtues taught by Jesus Christ were witnessed in full operation to the highest point of vigour: men lived in constant intercourse with the Creator, they lived a heavenly life, and thought of eternity alone; for its treasures and felicity alone they laboured. When circumstances had changed, religious too changed their mode of operation for the divine glory and the salvation of men. The deluge of barbarism descended on the Church of God, and threatened to destroy at once both religion and every vestige of valuable literature; at the same time the progress of civilisation was suspended, and men were, to a great extent, withdrawn from all other occupations to devote themselves to war, contention, massacre, and pillage. To mitigate as far as possible these evils, the members of religious bodies devoted themselves to the task of preserving and multiplying books of every useful description, but especially those which contained the Divine word, or were in any respect important to religion. They applied their attention also to agriculture with zeal and admirable success.

After some centuries another era commenced, and the deluge of barbarism and ignorance was succeeded by another of equal, or more destructive power; the revival of letters threatened the Church with a return of pagan error, and later on the spirit of heresy led to a widely ex-

tended perversion of faith in the world. At the same time a new continent was discovered, the existence of which had not been suspected in Europe. Again, the monastic spirit of the Church changed the form and theatre of its operations to meet the rising circumstances and to save and gather in the harvest of souls which were in danger of perishing. New religious orders were established, whose members were to be employed in preaching and the duty of education, in order to maintain the doctrines of divine truth and counteract the progress of error. Since then, the command of our Lord has been fulfilled by the religious orders with never-failing fidelity: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."* The inspired words of the prophet have been verified by them: "There are no speeches or languages where their voices are not heard. Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world."† Their teaching has been heard in the far-distant East, in China and Japan; and in the West, in California and among the savages of the Rocky Mountains as well as in those regions divided by the towering Andes. Numbers of heroic members, even of the female religious orders are to be found at the present moment amid the snows which border on the Northern Pole, and under the burning suns of the torrid zone, disseminating the words of eternal life, and winning souls for heaven and for God.

* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

† Ps. xv. 5.

Such is the spirit of the religious state; a spirit of alienation from the world and of devotion to the service of God, a spirit of attachment to Jesus Christ, and of fervour in the imitation of his virtues; a spirit of exalted and beatific holiness, and of untiring zeal for the divine glory and the salvation of souls. Such a spirit can neither be implanted in the soul, nor maintained in vigour, without the means pointed out in the sacred exercises detailed in this volume; nor without much fervour and perseverance in prayer. It will be useful for this important end, to present to the reader the following special prayers, translated with little change from the Latin in use in the Society of Jesus to preserve in its fervour the religious spirit. Their daily or frequent use is much recommended.

PRAYERS TO OBTAIN AND INCREASE THE TRUE SPIRIT
OF THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

Prayer to the Eternal Father.

Eternal Father, who hast withdrawn us from the vanities of the world to contend for the crown of everlasting life, vouchsafe to purify our souls by thy sanctifying presence, and fortify them with the grace of perseverance, that thus protected by thy aid, and rendered faithful in the observance of thy commandments we may attain to that felicity which Thou hast promised to those who love Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Vouchsafe, O most benign Jesus! by this thy sacred name, to be to me a Jesus; and to grant to me the spirit

of thy faithful followers. Engrave on my heart, I beseech Thee, this thy adorable name, that I may be nurtured by its sweetness, and so inflamed with its love, as to die in the ardour of affection, Jesus to me most sweet, Jesus most delightful, Jesus most beloved; and that I may invoke to my latest breath thy dear, mellifluous, and redeeming name, Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Amen.

Prayer to the Divine Spirit.

O God, who hast prepared in heaven a dwelling for those who renounce this defiling world, replenish with thy celestial gifts the hearts of our brethren, that they may be united in the bonds of fraternal charity, and with one accord observe thy precepts. Grant them religious sobriety, simplicity, and peace, and let them feel that they have received, without previous merits, the grace of their vocation. Let their lives correspond with their name, and their conduct be as edifying as their profession is sacred: Who, with the Father and the Son, livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin.

Virgin Mother of God, first and most perfect of all created beings, cherish with peculiar love the entire religious order to which I belong. Let the hearts of its members be modelled on that of thy Divine Son, and as they rejoice in being consecrated to his service, let them ever feel that they enjoy his aid and protection.

Second Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The second on the End of the Religious Soul.

1 *Point.* Vocation to the contemplative life.

2 *Point.* Vocation to the active life of zeal.

3 *Point.* Vocation to the union of both.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude.* Imagine you hear our Lord say: "I have chosen you and appointed you that you should go and should bear fruit."*

2 *Prelude.* Renew your prayer: "Lord, make me know my end, . . . that I may know what is wanting to me."†

1 *Point.* The contemplative life. To be called to a life of contemplation and prayer is to be chosen from the ranks of men to converse with God. Not with men, however distinguished for wisdom or for dignity, not with angels, but with God. What a favour for a poor, sinful creature! To be admitted to familiar intercourse with an earthly monarch would be deemed by worldlings the extreme of felicity; yet how insensible am I to the predilection of heaven! How wonderful is the familiarity to which God admits the soul which suffers itself to be led by the sweet attractions of his grace in prayer! "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her

* John, xv. 16.

† Ps. xxxviii. 5.

heart.”* “My Father will love him, and we will come to him, says our Lord, and will make our abode with him.”† As if the Creator and Lord of all things sought pleasure in converse with his creature. Spiritual writers indicate the close union of the religious soul with God by terming it his spouse. Should I be ungrateful for such condescension! Should I not seek the conversation of God with a corresponding ardour! Should it not be my constant study to purify my soul, and render it worthy of such exalted company! Should I not discard every inordinate affection! How dread must be my fate should I be indifferent to heavenly communication with my Creator! “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”‡

2 Point. The active life of zeal. To be called to labour for the salvation of souls is to participate in the vocation of the apostles. The religious who has received such a vocation is constituted with them, in the language of the Holy Ghost, not only the minister, but the ambassador, the coadjutor of God.” “For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors.”§ “For we are God’s coadjutors.”|| What confidence does this suppose! It is true that to repress our pride we are instructed: “The base things of the world hath God chosen.”¶ Yet God ever proportions his gifts to the condition in which He places us. How exalted a destiny, then, to be made a vessel of election, as were the apostles! And in what does the apostle become the coadjutor of God? In promoting the glorious end of all

* Osee, ii. 14. † John, xiv. 23. ‡ John, vi. 69. § 2 Cor. v. 20.

|| 1 Cor. iii. 9.

¶ 1 Cor. i. 28.

His stupendous works, the only object which his Divine perfections permit him to keep in view in all the external operations of his wisdom, his power, and his goodness—the end of the creation and the redemption of mankind: his own glory, in fine, in the salvation of souls. This St. Dionysius terms “the most divine of all divine things,” If this be my vocation, what dreadful infidelity it is to waste my time, my energies, on vain and trifling objects! If the servant merit chastisement for a neglect of duty, what penalties sufficiently severe for a neglect of duties such as mine! If the ordinary Christian be condemned for abuse of talents, what is to be the consequence of squandering graces such as have been bestowed on me, for so divine a purpose! Oh! let me feel that all my energies are insufficient for my high vocation: let me, then, devote them without reserve.

3 *Point.* Union of the contemplative and active life. Either of these states, taken singly and alone, elevates the religious soul far above the most exalted conditions of secular life; but, when combined, they form a state the highest, even in the views of God, to which a human being can aspire. If then, St. Leo was justified in addressing in such words the ordinary Christian: “Comprehend, O Christian, your dignity, and being elevated to a participation of the divine nature; return not to your former vileness by unworthy conduct,” with what multiplied force can they be applied to a religious so called by God! Let me turn my eyes on the busy children of the world, and, vain as they are, let me take a lesson of wisdom and duty from them. What are the objects which they pursue? The dross of the earth; a morsel of bread;

defiling pleasures ; empty distinctions, founded on the breath of mortals as weak and vain as they are themselves ; and yet what ardent aspiring, what indefatigable industry, what anxiety, what toils, what pains ! And I have to toil for the kingdom of heaven ; for a share in the glory and felicity of God ; for immortal souls ; and I can look around me and see millions perish for eternity, and yet be cold, and sluggish, and inactive, and neglect my exalted duties in the service of my Divine, eternal Lord ! Let me deplore the past ; let me feel that a total detachment from unworthy objects is requisite for the performance of what my state demands ! Let me here irrevocably discard them from my heart ! Let me devote it without reserve to God !

Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ.—“ Oh ! great Creator and Redeemer of mankind, who hast so distinguished and elevated the most unworthy of thy creatures, a being taken from the dust and defiled with iniquity, purify my heart and lips that I may be no longer unworthy to converse with Thee, or to proclaim thy divine law. Fill me with thy spirit ; inflame my heart with the fire of thy celestial love ; replenish my soul with the spirit of that exalted state to which Thou hast called me. Grant me that pure and ardent zeal which has ever animated thy true servants, that I may enkindle and spread widely the flames of that heavenly fire which Thou camest to cast on the earth. Amen. Renew the offering. “ Accept, O Lord,” &c. &c.

EXAMEN OF THE INTERIOR.

On the Spirit of the Religious State.

In what degree have I acquired the holy spirit of the religious state ? What are the chief features of that

spirit? It is directly opposed to the spirit of the world : it is that spirit which belongs to the kingdom of Jesus Christ—the kingdom of heaven. The spirit of the world impels its votaries to seek reputation, honour, distinction, and elevation ; the spirit of religion teaches to love and desire what is lowly and humble ; it delights to be unknown, forgotten, disregarded, even despised, for the divine name of Jesus, and to wear his uniform and livery. The spirit of the world teaches to love riches, gold, and affluence ; its aspiration is ever the same—more ! more ! more ! The spirit of religious life inclines to poverty, and seeks to be content with what is poor and of little value, The world delights in pleasure, amusement, and the indulgence of sensuality ; the spirit of religion is one of mourning and self-denial ; it looks forward to heaven for pleasure, and here looks for spiritual enjoyment alone, as far as frail nature permits. The hearts of those who have acquired the holy spirit of religion are in heaven ; there is their treasure and their home ; their ardent desire is to reach that home, and to lead others to it in great number. The spirit of religion leads to delight in prayer, recollection of mind, and union with God. Are such my ruling inclinations?

SECOND MEDITATION.

On Mortal Sin.

- 1 *Point.* Mortal sin considered in itself.
- 2 *Point.* Mortal sin considered as it is viewed by God.
- 3 *Point.* Mortal sin considered in its consequences to man.

Preparatory prayer : “My God,” &c.

1 *Prelude*. Imagine you behold the fall of the rebel angels from above, as a shower of fire.

2 *Prelude*. Beg an utter horror of mortal sin.

1 *Point*. Mortal sin considered in its own enormity. Mortal sin is an act of rebellion against God, the Creator, Lord, and Almighty Sovereign of the Universe. It is committed by a vile being, a worm of the earth, essentially nothing in itself, which holds all that it is or possesses from his infinite bounty. This creature, by a sinful act, implicitly says to the Creator, "I will not obey," and thus contemns the authority of God: it prefers its own will to his, and thus in a manner gives itself a superiority over Him. What enormity! It contemns the sanctity and goodness of God, as it is guilty of the only act which can violate them. It contemns the justice of God, because it defies condemnation; and his power, because it dares the severity with which He punishes sin. The sinner contemns God in another point of view, by sacrificing the enjoyment of Him and his divine perfections for eternity, and he prefers to God objects the most vile, the most degrading. What confusion should the sinner feel when he reflects on the low gratifications which he has preferred to the infinite beauty and perfection of the Deity. The creature who thus contemns his God, has been loaded by Him, as has been said, with innumerable favours: it has been created, redeemed, and destined by Him to eternal felicity. The very instruments of his sin are the benefits of God. "I multiplied her silver and gold, which they have used in the service of Baal,* The sinner, too, defiles the image of his Creator

* Osee, ii. 8.

on his soul, and the Christian who sins violates the vows made at baptism, dishonours his consecration in the blood of his Redeemer, and desecrates the temple of the Holy Ghost. What matter for eternal remorse, confusion, and despair if pardon be not obtained.

2 Point. Mortal sin as viewed by God. God alone can form a just estimate of the enormity of sin. He alone comprehends his own infinite dignity; He alone can measure the comparative vileness of the offender; and, in consequence, He alone can conceive the magnitude of the offence: to comprehend it requires an intellect infinitely perfect. The intensity of the hatred which the Creator bears to sin we can imagine only by meditating the severity with which he punishes it. The angels committed but one sin of thought; the bounty and goodness of God had induced Him to create them, to bestow upon them inconceivable beauty and exalted perfection; his mercy, too, is infinite; yet, neither his goodness nor his mercy could preserve them from his wrath when he beheld them infected with sin. Without a moment for repentance they were hurled into the abyss of eternal perdition. Our first parents were created in a state of felicity, which now we find it difficult to conceive, and were promised the possession of endless glory in heaven, to be purchased without pain: they sinned, and their crime closed the gates of heaven, drew down a malediction on the earth, and entailed on themselves and their posterity death and all the evils we endure. Read the abomination in which sin is held by God in the torments of hell. A soul created to his image and purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ is condemned for sin to that eternal fire. That soul may

have led a long life of sanctity; may have done much apparently for God; yet if it desert Him in the end but by one mortal sin, nothing can save it from the fury of his wrath. Through eternity it suffers, but its sufferings cannot appease: through eternity it laments, but its lamentations are unheard. But nothing can so manifest the hatred of God to sin as the sufferings of his Divine Son. The offended Creator would accept of no atonement from creatures: "Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire."* Nothing could satisfy his justice but the blood of the Redeemer. "He spared not even his own Son."† "For the sins of my people I have struck Him."‡ Behold your Redeemer at Gethsemani; He prays that his chalice may be removed, but He is not heard. Will you not shed tears for crimes, O religious soul, for which He shed his blood?

3 *Point.* Mortal sin considered in its consequences to man. These consequences may be viewed either as they affect mankind in general, or as they are felt by each individually. The general consequences of sin are the deprivation of original justice and innocence which flowed from the single sin of our first parents; the loss of Paradise and its delights; the subjection to labour, pain, sickness, and death; the eternal torments of hell. Take a review of all the evils which have harassed mankind, and which render the earth a vale of tears: they all are the fruits of sin. How many plagues have scourged mankind? What provinces have been desolated by famine? What countries have been ravaged by wars? What cities have been pillaged and their inhabitants put to the sword?

* Ps. xxxix. 7.

† Rom. viii. 32.

‡ Isai. liii. 8.

How many have been swallowed up by earthquakes? What myriads have been lost by shipwreck? What misery prevails among the poor in all countries? How many widows are there? how many orphans? Thus sin is the source of every evil. The individual soul, purified by baptism, is the beloved child of God, brother and co-heir of Jesus Christ: by sin it is rendered his enemy. It loses its right to heaven, and incurs the sentence of perdition. Look around on creation; evils abound on every side: they are all, without exception, the noxious fruit of this poisonous and prolific tree. Look down into hell: its endless misery arises from sin: mortal sin is the fuel that will cause its fires to rage for eternity. O dread monster, sin. O deadly poison, the infinite evil of which no created mind can comprehend! O evil, more terrible than death or hell, for thou art the cause of both, and of every other evil that has ever afflicted angels or men! Thou hast lighted up those unquenchable fires, and hast buried in them countless millions of the children both of heaven and earth. Thou hast blasted the beauty of the terrestrial paradise, brought on the world the malediction of God, and filled it with death and all the evils that have ever afflicted mankind, "as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned."* No evil has ever afflicted created beings that is not to be traced to thee. Thou hast made the earth a vale of tears. Yet this is the evil that men love more than God! This is the evil with which they repay all his beneficence and his wondrous love! This is the evil with which I have repaid,

* Rom. v. 12.

O Lord, all thy benefits to me. Thou hast been my Creator, my Father, my generous benefactor; Thou hast loved me from eternity, and hast given me my being and all that I possess, and I have become the willing slave of thy eternal enemy, and repaid thy benefits with injury and insult: Thou hast created me for a share in thy heavenly kingdom, and I have well-nigh plunged myself in the fiery gulf of hell. Oh! shameful, unspeakable folly. Oh! enormous guilt and perversity. "Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will weep day and night"* for my sins and enormous ingratitude? "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy indignation, nor chastise me in thy wrath."† "Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord, Lord, hear my voice. Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication."‡ Continue, religious soul, to deplore your sins with the utmost intensity of sorrow, and as you must feel that you can never adequately atone for the least of them, resolve that your sorrow shall be lifelong, and that you will never cease to grieve for them. Thank your merciful Creator for calling you to a penitential life, and as love is the chief means for obliterating sin, resolve also to lead a life of constant fervour, and never to relax your efforts to advance in virtue.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION ON TEPIDITY.

Nothing is more essential in religious life than to guard against this insidious malady, which often may have con-

* Jerem. ix. 1.

† Ps. vi. 2.

‡ Ps. cxxix. 1, 2.

sumed the vigour of the soul, and reduced it to the point of spiritual death before the unhappy victim is conscious of his infirmity.

1 *Point.* The dangers of tepidity.

2 *Point.* The signs of tepidity.

3 *Point.* The remedies for tepidity.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Point.* The dangers of tepidity. Tepidity is a spiritual languor or disease of the soul, which gradually wastes its vital powers, and reduces it to the extreme of debility, as is the case in the decline of bodily strength, and if not checked in time it leads to the death of the soul. While this infirmity prevails, as in corporal maladies, the soul experiences a loathing of everything that can tend to invigorate, for prayer, meditation, and spiritual reading, but most of all for those salutary remedies which are necessary for correction. If it do admit some portion of what may be termed the food of the soul, like a disordered stomach, it draws from the aliment the increase of its disease; for in consequence of the imperfect manner in which the tepid soul performs spiritual duties, it converts them from sources of grace and merit into means of offending God. Another dread danger attends this malady of the soul, arising from the abuse of grace. The amount of grace decreed by God from eternity for each soul is ample and generous, corresponding with the liberality of the divine donor: it has, however, its just limits, which are unknown to us. This heavenly treasure is squandered by the tepid, as the reckless spendthrift squanders his patrimony, and long before death they may have consumed it all, and become doomed even while

they live, without suspecting it. Tepidity alienates the soul from God, and God reciprocally from the soul: it multiplies faults, destroys merits, and even dries up the fountains of grace. It defeats the efficacy of prayer, as the due dispositions are wanting: it deprives the soul of joy in the Holy Ghost, and renders it callous to all that can excite devotion.

2 *Point.* The signs of tepidity. The tepid soul may be distinguished by its committing venial sin with little or no remorse: it is content to avoid mortal. It is negligent in the correction of daily faults: it cares not to acquire virtues, to advance in perfection, to treasure up merit. It performs its spiritual duties without any care to reap their fruit; because others do so; because the time is marked, and nothing else occurs to be done. Confessions are made without amendment, and communions without increase of spiritual strength. No care is taken to purify the intention: little or no regard is paid to the observance of religious rules: mortification is forgotten, the practice of penance is laid aside, amusements and relaxation are sought with avidity. To all this will often be added a false conscience; faults will be disguised, palliated, or excused. My soul, how much of this alarming portrait corresponds with your state? As far as you can trace these features in your present condition, so far you have become infected with the awful disease of tepidity. What do you plead in excuse? It may be said that I cannot as yet entirely forego or subdue my pride, my dissipation of mind, my vanity, my sensuality: I cannot deny myself so far. How great is the obduracy of the human heart when habits of tepidity and sin have ren-

dered it callous and obstinately rebellious to the invitations of grace! It may then be compared to the heart of Judas when his Divine Master knelt at his feet and washed them, and looking into his face with eyes of mercy and love, appealed to his heart, seared and rendered insensible by habits of evil, wilfully and perseveringly indulged and cherished. The solicitations of divine mercy to the presumptuous soul of the religious who perseveres in tepidity may be compared also to the appeals to the cruel and insensible Jews, made in the name of our Lord in the Office of the Church, with expressions so truly beautiful and pathetic: "My people, what have I done to thee? and in what have I displeased thee? Answer thou me. Is it because I have delivered thee from the land of Egypt that thou has prepared to crucify thy Saviour?" Our Lord may be supposed to say to the religious soul: "I have led thee from the world into religion, a land flowing with the richest graces of heaven; I have divided the sea for you; I have removed the obstacles that prevented your consecration to Me: I have cultivated your soul as a favourite vineyard; I have fed you with manna, and fertilized your spirit with the waters of eternal life. I have exalted you and numbered you among my favourites and friends, and you have repaid me with ingratitude and sin, which is to me the most enormous insult and the direst infliction. Sin to me is more hateful than the scourge or the crown of thorns; it is more dreadful than the cross which I endured to secure for you eternal felicity and a crown of glory. What have I done, oh! ungrateful and unworthy religious, to merit such a return?" "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will

begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.”* Such has been the fate of innumerable tepid souls.

3 *Point*. Remedies of tepidity. There is but one remedy for the tepid soul, to know and to tremble at its danger. Or, to speak more precisely, without this condition, no remedies can be applied with effect. If it once open its eyes to the dreadful abyss that yawns beneath it, then hope may be entertained; because it will then seek with ardour to avoid it. But how difficult it is to give the tepid soul a salutary dread of its dangerous condition! “I would thou wert cold or hot,” says the Divine Spirit by St. John:* and why? Because the abandoned sinner, when a moment of reflection comes, is sensible of his dreadful state, and his terror often brings him with tears and remorse to the feet of his offended Creator; but the tepid, like that soul admonished by the Apostle, imagine themselves to be rich and wealthy, and flatter themselves that they want for nothing, whereas they are “poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked.”† But they see it not: they are blind or callous to God’s judgments. Some natural dispositions favourable to virtue; some transient, sensible devotion in prayer; some ineffectual purposes of amendment which they experience in themselves, serve to disguise to their view their awful condition. There is one source of security for me, one means of salvation, to make good use of this retreat. Should I do so—then no more sin: no more tepidity: I may hope for fervour in a truly religious life, and steady advancement towards perfection.

• *Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ*.—O Great Eternal

* Apoc. iii. 15.

† Ibid, iii. 16.

Lord, Judge of the living and the dead! Thou who knowest all things: “illumine my eyes that I may never sleep in death.”* Allow not the enemy of my soul or my own self love to deceive me. Never can I repay the least of thy favours; allow me not, then, to make Thee an unworthy return: there have been no bounds to thy love: permit not me to be cold and ungrateful.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Venial Sin.

1 *Point.* The enormity of venial sin.

2 *Point.* Venial sin detested by God.

3 *Point.* Venial sin considered in its consequences to the soul.

Preparatory prayer: “My God,” &c.

1 *Prelude.* Present to your imagination a soul covered with hideous stains and ulcers, as by a leprosy.

2 *Prelude.* Pray: “O Lord! wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”†

1 *Point.* Venial sin considered in its inherent enormity. It participates in many of the dreadful qualities of mortal sin. It is an act of resistance to God, and though it does not imply a total casting off of allegiance, nor seem to address to God that declaration of rebellion, “I will not serve,” it implies that the sinner will not stoop to please, to gratify his Creator. And is not this a dreadful enormity? It is, like mortal sin, a violation of the sanctity of God, who says: “Be you holy, because I am holy.”‡ It indicates also a contempt for his justice and his power. Venial sin does not, by its commission, indicate that con-

* Ps. xii. 4.

† Ps. l.

‡ Levit. xi. 44.

tempt for the perfections of God which leads the sinner to risk their enjoyment for eternity, as is the case in mortal sin ; but it contains a species of malice peculiar to itself, which is extremely injurious and insulting to the Deity. When deliberate, it implies that the sinner thinks little of offending as long as he remains assured that he incurs not the danger of eternal punishment, but he is regardless of the offence and injury done to his Creator. The venial sins of persons in the state of grace, and especially of religious, beyond the ingratitude which accompanies every offence of God, bear with them also another peculiarity of malice. They are favourites of God, his beloved children ; their deliberate faults have consequently a resemblance to that favourite of a merciful prince, or of a child presuming on affection, who should despise the commands, and outrage the feelings of his king or parent, as long as he abstains from open rebellion, or from conspiring against his life. Such are the sins which I have multiplied daily, and with so little remorse.

2 Point. Venial sin detested by God. After mortal sin it is the greatest object of his abomination. It is a greater evil in his eyes than would be the destruction and the annihilation of all his stupendous works, of his greatest favourites among the saints, of his innumerable choirs of angels, however perfect, however exalted they may be ; nor could he permit a creature to commit the smallest venial fault to preserve the universe. How terribly has He chastised venial sin even in his greatest servants ? Mary, the sister of Moses, commits a sin which appears to be but venial, and she is struck with a leprosy, and excluded from her people, nor can the intercession of her

holy brother obtain for her immediate pardon. The wife of Lot, for indulging but once her curiosity, is deprived of life, and rendered a monument of the rigour with which the Creator visits the smallest faults. Moses, however holy, is rigorously punished for a venial sin; and David sees seventy-two thousand of his subjects perish for his single act of vanity. And these are the faults which I have committed in such numbers! Let me reflect, that, however high the perfection to which a saint may have attained, how great soever the merits which he may have accumulated, the least shadow of sin would exclude him from the presence of God, and that for eternity, were that stain not removed. The sanctity of the holy Mother of the Redeemer herself, were she not perfectly free from every stain, could never obtain admission into the realms of bliss. How dreadful is the rigour with which venial sin is chastised in purgatory! Souls beloved of God are there detained perhaps for ages in torment, until the last debt of atonement is paid. St. Augustine declares, that the fire which purifies the just in purgatory is the same which tortures the reprobate in hell.

3 *Point*. Venial sin considered in its consequences to the soul. If we have meditated well the hatred borne by God to venial sin, we can form some idea of the diminution of his favour towards the soul that commits it: "I would," He says in the Apocalypse, "that thou wert either cold or hot."* He would have us love or hate Him; the indifferent soul He detests. We shall also conceive how natural it is that it should lead to mortal sin, as it deprives the

* Apoc. iii. 15.

sinner of that special protection of God, which alone can preserve him. The deliberate commission of venial sin always supposes a great infidelity to grace, and may often break that chain of efficacious graces to which the salvation of individuals is attached. Thus venial sin is often the cause of eternal perdition, as shall be explained, especially in religious and others more favoured by God. Venial sin deprives us of spiritual consolations, and thus deprives religious life of its charm, and renders it distasteful; it prevents the merits which fervour would accumulate, and often entails upon us severe chastisements, even in this life. Habits of venial sin constantly lead to perdition by the abuse of grace; the amount of grace designed for each soul is fixed, as already meditated, in the decrees of God from eternity: it is abundant and liberal, but yet it has a limit which never can be transgressed. This amount of grace is, as it were, the patrimony of the soul; and if it be expended before the arrival of death, the soul is lost. The numerous graces that form this patrimony are continually wasted by habits of venial sin in the lives of the tepid, by neglect of prayer and defects in its exercise, by neglect of mortification and the want of other virtues. Thus does venial sin become a cause of eternal perdition. Consider, in the last place, the exquisite care ceaselessly employed by the servants and attendants of the sovereigns of this low world, that minister around their thrones and in their presence. What gorgeous magnificence and lustre appear in their attire! What anxiety exists to remove every defect, every speck or stain that might offend the eyes of the poor mortals whom they serve! Turn, then, to reflect on your own soul and views, if you

can bear the hideous sight of those innumerable stains of sin with which you fear not to appear before that God of infinite holiness and majesty whom you are called on to serve in a special manner, and to whom you minister as a chosen servant. Could it be surprising were He to spurn you and chase you from his presence? How infinite is his patience and his mercy! With what confusion, with what tears and remorse, with what fervent sorrow, should you say in the words of holy David: "Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow."*

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—O God of holiness, bounty, and mercy, we must not forget that Thou art also the God of justice. Thou hast found iniquity in thy angels, and Thou canst not overlook it in our lowly and debilitated nature, so much inclined to evil. Our weakness Thou art ever ready to pardon, but a contempt and disregard of thy sanctity Thou canst never tolerate. Give me, O Lord, a dread and horror for all that is displeasing to Thee, and that desire of being ever purer in thy sight which springs from true and ardent love. Again I implore: "Wash me yet more from my iniquity, O Lord, and cleanse me from my sin . . . Thou shalt wash me, and I shall become whiter than snow."†

Renew your resolution to lead a penitential life, and never to cease from your efforts to advance in virtue and divine love. "Our Father," &c.

* Ps. l. 4, 9.

† Ibid.

Third Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the Torments of Hell.

THE state of the reprobate in hell is termed, in the Word of God, "the second death." If we compare it with the first, or the separation of the soul from the body, we find that, in some respects, it resembles it, in others it is dissimilar; but in meditating both the one and the other, we shall find it of course to be infinitely more dreadful. To conceive a salutary fear of the divine judgments it will be useful to ponder profoundly this comparison:—

1 *Consideration.* The separation of body and soul—the pain of loss in hell.

2 *Consideration.* Burial—the grave—the bed of fire.

3 *Consideration.* The companions of the grave—the worm of hell.

4 *Consideration.* The final union of body and soul in torment.

5 *Consideration.* The corruption of the grave—the eternity of hell.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude.* Contemplate the fiery abyss with its extended jaws; contemplate the multitude that daily fall into it as a ceaseless rain of fire.

2 *Prelude*. Pray that you may be preserved from that dread doom: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped: let me never be confounded."*

1 *Consideration*. The separation of body and soul in death—the pain of loss in hell. Temporal death consists in the separation of body and soul, and it deprives the human being for ever of the light of the sun, of the life of this world, and of all the joys and pleasures that belong to it; the second death is an eternal separation from God, the life of the soul: an evil so great, that St. Chrysostom has written, "imagine a thousand hells, and their other torments will bear no proportion to the loss of that glory." The words of St. Augustin are equally impressive: "The loss of God, or the separation from Him, is a penalty as infinite as God Himself." It must be observed, however, in the first place, that as this penalty is infinite by its own nature it never can be appreciated to its full extent by created beings; and also that it is not, in all probability, experienced by all the reprobate in the same degree. It is the most exquisite of the torments of hell, and of course will be experienced by the victims of sin in exact proportion to their guilt: "As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her."† In heaven the degrees of beatitude are regulated by the light of glory for the elect, as it enables them to see and contemplate the perfections of God each in proportion to his merit; in a manner somewhat similar we must suppose the dread darkness by which in hell the beauty of the Creator is concealed from the repro-

* Ps. xxx. 2.

† Apoc. xviii. 7.

bate, and lost to them, to be cast around each in proportion to his guilt. This pain of loss deprives also of the accidental glory and felicity of heaven, of the company of the blessed, and of every good. So far, it coincides with temporal death; but the latter, if it deprives us of the joys, separates us also from the sorrows of this life. Not so hell; God, who deprives the reprobate soul of the enjoyment of his perfections, makes it feel the severity of his justice. His power is not in hell to impart felicity, but it is there to punish and to torture. Hell separates from all that can bless, but it unites to all that can give pain. Hell is the abode of evil: imagine the combination of every possible evil, and that is hell.

2 *Consideration.* Burial—the grave—the bed of fire. Great is our horror of the grave, the sepulchre; its cold and cheerless gloom is terrible to the mind of man; but it is not so terrible as the thought of being buried in hell. The rich glutton “was buried in hell.”* In the grave the wretched body feels no pain; no hunger, no thirst, no torment, while it melts away and is consumed by worms; but in hell every sense will experience the utmost extreme of its own peculiar torture. Enumerate the various senses, and imagine the agonies which their combined and ceaseless torments will cause to the soul in hell. The eyes shall see nothing that can give pleasure, but every object that can cause disgust, fear, horror, and pain of every kind; the same may be said of the ears and the other senses, of each according to its peculiar nature. Reflect on the torment arising from even one sense in disease; multiply that by the senses and the hours of eternity.

* Luke, xvi. 22.

3 *Consideration.* The companions of the grave—the worm of hell. We loathe the companions of the grave. “Under thee,” says Isaias, “shall the moth be strewed and worms shall be thy covering.”* Hell, also, has its worm. “Their worm dieth not.”† The worm of the grave inflicts no torture; the wretched body is insensible. Not so that of hell; its gnawing is ceaseless and eternal. The worm of hell is probably twofold. Literally taken, it may be some monster demon whose office is to torment the reprobate. In a figurative sense, it is that despair which gnaws the condemned soul with the recollection of what it has lost, and the certainty that it never can find relief. Should I by my tepidity and folly incur the loss of heaven and of God, my reflections shall be such as these: Wretch that I am! I might have gained heaven; I might now possess my God and rest in his divine bosom for ever. For that I was created, for that I was redeemed, and the blood of the Eternal Son of the Father was shed to purchase for me endless beatitude. I was favoured beyond the generality of men. I was chosen from among the mass of my fellow-creatures and placed in more security. I was as “a chosen arrow” in the quiver of God. I was a vessel of election, called to be a man of God, especially dedicated to Him, a favourite and confidential servant; but I have violated and dishonoured my special consecration; I have repaid the favours lavished on me with ingratitude; I have lost God, and heaven, and myself, and that for eternity. I have lost eternal felicity; I have plunged myself in eternal misery and pain. Oh!

* Isai. xiv. 11.

† Mark, ix. 47.

cursed folly ! And for what have I sacrificed my birth-right in heaven ? For vile, contemptible, fleeting indulgence ; for mere sloth and folly. I was a Christian, a religious, a priest, a friend and brother of Jesus Christ. How easily might I have secured eternal peace, and rest, and joy ! How many of my companions, less favoured, perhaps, than I, are now secure in felicity and glory ! But I am lost, and lost for ever. Oh, madness ! oh, despair ! How many graces have I abused ! what numberless confessions ! what Communions ! what Masses ! what retreats ! and all are lost for me, and I am lost for ever ! Oh ! had I at such a propitious moment, which I now recall to mind, listened to the admonitions of my conscience, all might be well ; but it is now too late. And is there no room for repentance ? No ; I am lost for ever. Can there be no relief ? No ; I am lost, and for ever. Such, as he writhes on his bed of torture, will be the unceasing and eternal thoughts of the lost religious or priest. Shall they be mine ?

4 *Consideration.* The union of body and soul in hell. The horrors of the grave are not for the soul ; its spiritual nature relieves it from them. Not so is it secured against the agonies of hell. Besides its own peculiar torments, it participates in those of sense. That fire which seems capable of affecting matter alone will pierce its spiritual substance and subject it to agony which might seem to be contrary to its essence. United to its unhappy associate in crime, it will suffer the searching torment of fire. The body on earth contributes to the guilty pleasure of the soul, the soul to that of the body. In hell it will communicate to the soul the sensible torment which it naturally

could not experience, and the latter will maintain for eternity that life without which the body would be insensible to pain. Imagine the torment of a human being who has been accidentally interred alive. Naturally the torture of suffocation would be extremely brief, as life would immediately become extinct; but in hell the agony will be prolonged for ever. St. Teresa in her vision experienced some torments of this kind. And what will be the balm in all these torments? Imagine a human being tortured with various diseases; it cries for some balm or lenitive. What is the balm of hell? Fire—unsparing, unrelenting, ceaseless fire! Contemplate some agonising invalid when penetrated with it for eternity, without cessation or relief. Such will be the soothing balm of the reprobate for ever.

5 *Consideration.* The corruption of the grave—the eternity of hell. In the tomb the body is soon dissolved and returns to the form of dust from which it had its origin. It is to rise again immortal and incorruptible, never to die or be consumed. In hell there is no consumption, no change. The soul is incorruptible of its own nature, and will endure for ever to burn and to suffer; the body will be preserved by Almighty power to atone for criminal sloth and indulgence on earth. “As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give you to her.”*

Religious soul, how much reason you have with St. Augustin to exclaim: “Here cut, here burn, here spare me not, O Lord! that Thou mayest spare me in eternity.”

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—“Enlighten my eyes,

* Apoc. xviii. 7.

O Lord, that I may never sleep in death.”* O Lord ! how terrible art Thou in thy judgments ! how dreadful is thy wrath ! How dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the living God ! Who can dwell with devouring fire ? Who can endure everlasting burnings ?† But, “ the mercies of God that we are not consumed.” Oh ! eternal thanks that we are still secure ; that we still have time to wash out our sins and escape endless perdition ! O my God ! had not thy hand upheld me, my soul had almost dwelt in hell.” O Lord ! “ pierce Thou my flesh with thy fear, for I tremble at thy judgments.”‡ Have mercy on me, again I cry, O Lord, according to thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.§ “ Oh, let me never be confounded.”||

EXAMEN OF THE INTERIOR.

On the Desire and Study of Perfection.

The true spirit of religious life requires the love and study of perfect virtue, and one of the most undoubted and clearest indications of that spirit consists in purity of conscience and the hatred of all sin. Charity or the love of God cannot exist in the soul without a fixed determination to avoid all mortal sin, even at the expense of life itself ; but this does not suffice for perfect charity. That eminence of virtue requires that I should rather die than be guilty of a deliberate venial sin. Have I as yet acquired such purity of conscience ? I must not allow this retreat to terminate without having formed that determination. What object is it, what passion or inclination that has such

* Ps. xii. 4. † Isai. xxxiii. 14. ‡ Ps. cxviii. 120. § Ps. l. 2.

|| Ps. xxx. 2.

power over my soul as to induce me to offend God by a known wilful sin, however small or insignificant it may appear? Whatever it may be, nothing must be left undone by me to subdue it and eradicate it from my heart. Have I any habit of venial sin? Such habits endanger the souls of even ordinary Christians. Though it be true that no number of venial sins can constitute a mortal sin, yet in consequence of the abuse of grace by the evil habit, they often lead to eternal death. It may be said that the greatest danger of religious life lies in the abuse of grace, consequent tepidity, and habits of venial sin.

THIRD DAY.—SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Sentiments of the Sinner preserved from Hell.

- 1 *Point.* Reflections on his past danger.
- 2 *Point.* Reflections on his present safety.
- 3 *Point.* Reflections on the future.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

- 1 *Prelude.* As in the last meditation on hell.
- 2 *Prelude.* "In Thee have I hoped, O Lord, let me never be confounded."*

1 *Point.* The sinner's reflections on his past danger. St. Teresa was shown in a vision the fiery bed which she was to have occupied in hell if she had not changed her life, though it was the opinion of her confessors that she had never committed mortal sin; tepidity would have ruined her. Whatever, then, may have been my past life, whether stained with crimes, or but shaded and darkened with venial sins, I may justly conclude that I have incurred a

* Ps. xxx. 2.

similar danger. Let me, then, say with that king, "In the midst of my days I shall go to the gates of hell."* Let me look down and seek for that place of torture destined for me among the ranks of the reprobate. Where shall I find it? How deep must I descend? What tormentors, what measure of infliction was reserved for me? I may judge from the depth to which I have plunged in sin—from the freedom and malice with which I have revelled in guilt. "As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her."† When I look back on the danger which I have escaped, how should I shudder! My life but a slender thread, and hanging over such a gulf! Had it been cut by an offended, outraged God, I had been lost for ever, plunged in the fiery abyss; there now would my meditation be made in torment and despair. "The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed."‡ How often have I been spared! During those years of guilt or tepidity, at those past moments, which my memory now recalls, when I pushed my malice to extremity, had I been cut off, what would have been my fate? How many millions, less guilty, perhaps, have been, since I began to sin, plunged in hell! St. Francis Borgia looked on himself as a person escaped from hell, and was content that others should do so. Let me never forget what I have merited, and let the recollection preserve me in humility and holy fear.

2 *Point.* The sinner's present safety. In sleep terrifying phantoms often haunt the soul. What would be the feelings of a person awaking from a terrific dream, during

* Isai. xxxviii. 10

† Apoc. xviii. 7.

‡ Lament. iii. 22.

which his imagination had buried him in hell ! What his delight to find himself secure ! What should be mine, whom not a sick imagination but eternal truth instructs that I might justly have been there, to find that I am yet preserved ! “ Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell.”* How profoundly have I slept in guilt ! How should I rejoice and exult that I have not slept in eternal death ! What shall I return to my offended God for his mercy ! “ The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed.”† But my sleep is past. The day has returned. Let me devote it to his service ! Let me live for Him who died that I might live. “ That they who live may not now live for themselves but for Him who died for them.”‡ Shall I again return to sin ? Shall I again defy the hand that might have so often overwhelmed me in perdition ? Shall I again outrage that infinite mercy which has so often spared ? Shall I still remain obstinate in my tepidity ? No, my God, never more will I depart from Thee. I will no longer remain cold and ungrateful, lest Thou cast me off for ever.

3 *Point.* The sinner’s reflections regarding the future. How perfectly wise and true is the principle, “ There can be no sufficient security when eternity is at stake.” Could it by possibility occur that one of the damned should return to earth, and enter again on his probation, what means would he not adopt to prevent his being again condemned ? Would he not be vigilant in avoiding sin and its occasions ? Would he not be determined in subduing his passions ? Would he not be fervent and exact in the performance of duty ? Would he not embrace penance as

* Ps. xciii. 17.

† Lament. iii. 22.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 15.

the surest basis of security? Would he not love the cross as the means of atonement, and fly from indulgence and pleasure as his bane, and as a lure to bring him again within the reach of his eternal enemy? Would he not spend his days in silence, compunction, and prayer? And have I less reason to tremble and to fear? No! Should I neglect to atone for past sins, should I not properly regulate the future, I stand in the same danger as the person supposed. I know not now what may be my state. "Man knows not whether he be worthy of love or hatred."* What should I therefore do to render myself secure? Do I fear to do too much? Alas! such a fear can arise only from tepidity; and tepidity is the bane of religious souls; it is the constant snare of the enemy. Remember, O religious, "there can never be sufficient security where eternity is at stake."

Colloquy to the Divine Spirit.—O Divine Spirit, fountain and source of heavenly light! Thou alone canst dispel the darkness of our souls and dissipate by thy grace the delusions of self-love and all our spiritual enemies. Thou also alone canst purify us from those guilty or dangerous attachments that form, as it were, the chains of our souls, and bind them to those defiling objects that cause sin and spiritual death. Oh! display to me the original causes of the dread danger which I have escaped. Grant me light to discover the deceptions of my eternal enemy, and give me prudence and strength to enable me to avoid or to free myself from them. "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ.—O Divine Lord Jesus Christ, Redeemer of mankind, if I am not at present a

* Eccles. ix. 1.

victim of sin, chained and weltering in the burning lake, I owe it to thy mercy and thy wondrous love! Thou sawest my danger; Thou hadst pity on thy guilty slave that had foully and treacherously abandoned Thee to join the dark band of thy enemies. Thou sawest me in a manner as a brand already on flame in the infernal pool, but Thou didst descend from thy throne of glory in the highest heaven to rescue me, though a traitor to thy love, and didst quench in thy own adorable blood those avenging flames in which I had almost plunged myself for ever. Oh, wondrous mercy! Oh, unspeakable love and compassion! And what return am I to make to Thee, O Lord! Am I to give to Thee as little as possible? Am I to become ingenious in endeavouring to escape perdition in future at no cost, and defraud Thee of that gratitude and love which I owe Thee to so enormous an amount? Am I never to be generous with Thee? Can I hope to be really secure without loving Thee? And is my love of Thee to be nothing more than a disguised and unworthy love of myself? Thanks to thy infinite wisdom and benignity, a true love of Thee is the truest love of myself. Such is thy instruction in the Gospel: "He that will save his life in this world shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it."* The false love of myself had well nigh buried me in the depths of hell. Divine Lord Jesus! grant me now a true love both for Thee and myself; as thus alone can I escape in future those eternal fires. "Soul of Christ," &c.

* Matt. xvi. 25.

THIRD DAY.—PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION.

On Mortification.

1 *Point.* The necessity of self-denial or mortification.

2 *Point.* The fruits of self-denial.

3 *Point.* The practice of self-denial.

Preparatory prayer: My God, &c.

1 *Point.* The necessity of mortification. Ponder the words of your Redeemer, “Everyone of you that doth not renounce all . . . cannot be my disciple.”* “If any man hate not his father . . . yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”† “He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal.”‡ The person who hears these divine words and is not convinced that mortification is necessary for him, cannot be said to believe in Jesus Christ. It is necessary for every Christian, for these instructions are addressed to all—it is necessary in a greater degree for the religious. My pusillanimous soul recoils, perhaps, from the alarming doctrine, but we must say with St. Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” I may listen to a more flattering teacher, but Thou, O Lord Jesus! alone hast the words of eternal life. Why should I mortify myself? 1. Because I have sinned; because I have abandoned and offended my Creator. When I look back and contemplate the dark catalogue of my sins, and reflect that a long life of the most rigorous penance could not ade-

* Luke, xiv. 33.

† Ib. xiv. 26.

‡ John xii. 25.

quately atone for the least venial sin, what austerities can I refuse? When I reflect on judgment, on hell, which I have merited, what can I reject? "If thou didst consider seriously the pains of hell, thou wouldst dread no rigour."*

2. Because I have passions to subdue. Does not the fiery courser require a rein? Does not the senseless maniac require to be tied down? Then my blind and headstrong passions must be restrained. Whither have they not hurried me! Whither would they drag me? To eternal perdition. 3. Because I have high perfection to acquire. To attain to perfection in virtue without self-denial is an utter impossibility. The weeds of noxious passions must be eradicated before the celestial fruit of virtue can be cultivated with success. 4. Because I have to save souls. Look on the lives of the Apostles and others successful in converting souls. Never was important success obtained by any who were not distinguished for their spirit of mortification.

2 *Point.* Fruits of mortification. The votary of secular enjoyments shudders at the mere name of mortification, but the religious must entertain other sentiments. Without the spirit of mortification religious life is a thorny path, a bed of torture. There is endless contention between duty and pleasure, grace and passion, God and the soul; but, if that spirit be acquired, religious life is the secure and peaceful haven of the soul—it is a paradise on earth. "When you have reached that point that suffering is pleasing to you, then congratulate with yourself, for you have found a paradise on earth."† 1. Because it removes the causes of annoyance and pain. When do we suffer pain?

* Imit. of Christ.

† Ibid. B. II. c. 12.

When a malady prevails, when we are infirm. Remove the infirmity; restore health—then ease and enjoyment return. Our passions are the diseases of our souls. “Our fever is pride, is avarice,” writes a holy Father. These are the causes of torment: mortification removes them. It allays also the storms and tumults of the soul. 2. Because the yoke of our Redeemer is sweet and his burden light: but to whom? To those who have learned of Him by self-denial to be meek and humble of heart.”* They find peace for their souls. 3. Because the heart, purified by mortification, receives the abundance of spiritual consolations. “Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God.”† 4. Because it secures us against temptation. When we have subdued the traitors within we may defy our external enemy in the spiritual warfare; but if the former be strong and powerful, we fall an easy prey to the assaults of the latter.

3 *Point.* The exercise of mortification. Our passions, as has been considered, are the diseases of our souls; and as far as they prevail, the soul is always dangerously affected. Mortification or self-denial is the universal and indispensable remedy for those diseases; and if we desire, as we should do, to enjoy the full and perfect health of our souls, we must aspire to universal self-denial. This is especially evident regarding religious. All the fruits of religious life depend upon it. There is no security, no advancement in virtue without it. The soul advances in perfect virtue in proportion as it advances in self-denial. If it relaxes in that or lays it aside, the passions and evil habits, as weeds in a neglected soil, multiply,

* Matt. xi. 29.

† Matt. v. 8.

gain strength, and are widely propagated. Mortification must, therefore, be continual, and must extend to all things. It must preserve from sin and its occasions; it must prevent all excessive indulgence, even in what is lawful. It is indispensable for the exercise of temperance, for the observance of monastic rules and usages, for the practice of charity and perfect virtue in all things, for the exact adhesion to religious discipline, for every sacrifice which virtue and duty demand. Without it there can be found in the soul no purity of intention to labour for God. The unmortified will seek themselves, not God or his divine pleasure or glory. Without the habit of self-denial the soul each day, each hour, and each moment, seeks the gratification of its own desires, not the end for which it has been created. There are, therefore, constant violations of the divine views in its regard, and a continual accumulation of at least venial sin. At the same time there will be as constant a rejection of grace, the danger arising from which cannot be exaggerated or imagined. The religious must mortify himself in every respect—his thoughts, desires, and the affections of his soul. He must reject those which are dangerous, idle, and imperfect, and cherish those which are holy, and which lead to virtue and to God. He must mortify his senses—eyes, ears, tongue, and palate. Corporal mortifications are the lowest in degree, but when health permits, they should not be omitted. They require caution, however, especially with respect to the young and inexperienced, who may be led to carry them to excess. They should, therefore, be exercised under the control of obedience; but, on the other hand, if

they be entirely neglected, habits of internal self-denial can with difficulty be acquired.

In the lecture on self-denial the subject is more fully developed.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Death of the tepid Religious.

1 *Point*. Death considered as the end of time.

2 *Point*. Death considered as the beginning of eternity.

3 *Point*. The circumstances attending the hour of death.

Preparatory Prayer : "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude*. Imagine yourself on your death-bed, surrounded by mourning friends.

2 *Prelude*. Say fervently: "Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them."*

1 *Point*. Death is the end of time. Life is but a journey towards eternity ; time is the day allowed us to perform it, during which our Redeemer exhorts us to hasten on, as the night approaches when no person can labour. "Walk while you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not."† Behold the tepid religious overtaken by that darkness: a darkness full of dread danger to him. He has loitered on his way, and he knows not now how far he may be from that term at which he ought to have arrived. He has suffered trifling and degrading objects to impede his advancement, and he is without a single excuse to justify his delay. He was richly provided by his bountiful Creator with means to perform his journey with

* Num xxiii. 10

† John, xii. 35.

security and ease ; but he has squandered them idly ; and of all the inestimable graces which he has received he can render no satisfactory account. How rigorous an account will be speedily exacted ! He has wandered far from the path pointed out to him, and now nor time nor strength remain to retrieve his error. He may deplore his folly, but his tears will not recall the hours that are gone by. He may beg for graces, but the many he has abused impede their current. My soul, however unbounded our reliance on the infinite mercy of God, a state such as we contemplate is one of dreadful danger. The hour of death cannot be secure if years of life are squandered and abused. How dread to hang over the fiery abyss in the manner you have just contemplated !

2 *Point*. Death the beginning of eternity. The eyes that are closed to the scenes of time open on those of eternity ; and then the lot is irrevocably cast : “ If the tree fall . . . in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be.”* Whatever may be the state of sanctity or guilt, of merit or demerit, in which the soul is found by death, no opportunity can ever be afforded either of increasing the one or remedying the other. A bad death can never be remedied. “ It is appointed for men once to die.”† What unaccountable folly, then, in the tepid religious to expose himself to a danger so irretrievable ! Of all those trifles which amused him here, and diverted his attention from the care of his soul, not one can follow him beyond the grave ; and for these has he sacrificed innumerable degrees of glory which he might have gained, exposed eternal felicity to risk, and incurred the danger of ultimate per-

* Eccles. xi. 3.

† Heb. ix. 27.

dition. An eternity of glory to be lost!—an eternity of misery to be incurred! What a dreadful, what a penetrating thought! Penetrating to all, except perhaps to the tepid, the worst feature in whose malady is that they become callous to these awful truths. Religious soul, if you shudder at this reflection, abhor tepidity; if you shudder not, how terrible is your danger!

3 *Point.* The circumstances attending the hour of death. Behold the tepid religious at the hour of death. The sentence of our Redeemer has been verified in his regard, death has come at the moment when least expected. “At what hour you think not the Son of Man will come.”* He is unwilling to believe death near, unwilling to hear of preparation. How dreadful a danger for him that requires preparation so much! The progress of his malady, however, the sinking of his strength, leave no room for hope or doubt; death appears certain and near. “Take order with thy house; thou shalt die and not live.”† Thus does his soul admonish him. What terrible apprehensions now assail him! He knows not whether he may be lost for ever. He is soon to appear before his Judge, whom he has not been careful to propitiate; he has irritated Him by numberless venial sins, perhaps by mortal; he has despised the admonitions of his grace, and has reason to fear the consequence. “Because I called, and you refused, . . . I will laugh at your destruction, and will mock.”‡ Whither shall he look for consolation? To the holiness of his profession? He has lived unworthy of it; he has neglected its essential obligation to seek perfection; it may cause his condemnation. To his confessions? They have been made

* Luke, xii. 40.

† Isai. xxxviii. 1.

‡ Prov. i. 24, 26.

through habit, without care; they have left many doubts. To his communions and other acts of piety? In consequence of his want of fervour, they may have added to his guilt. But one act of true contrition can remedy all.—He has not nurtured pious sentiments; his faith is languid; his love of God is cold; his horror of sin imperfect; he has not merited high graces; and now, when racked with pain, perhaps but half possessed of reason, how shall he assume those salutary sentiments? Oh, dread habit of tepidity and sloth! fatal canker of the religious soul! you are as a lurking enemy that watches in secret for the destruction of his victim: how should I fear and hate your seduction!

Colloquy to our Redeemer.—Divine Redeemer of mankind, who hast loved us with a charity so generous, so unsparing and unbounded, who hast shed for us thy blood to the last drop, and endured, for our salvation, every torment and humiliation without reserve, take pity on my cowardice, my sloth, and my disgraceful weakness. Oh! grant me some small portion of thy generous spirit. As my love of Thee is so cold, O Lord, penetrate my heart and my very flesh with thy holy fear, lest I may be betrayed by my cowardice and lost for ever. Now is the time for prudence, O Divine Lord! now is the time for wise preparation against the terrors of an unhappy death; now is the moment for exertion, that I may fulfil all my duties, that I may atone for all my past transgressions, and leave nothing to betray me at my last hour to my eternal enemy. “Soul of Christ,” &c.

Colloquy to the Divine Spirit.—O Divine Spirit, source of all grace and charity, inspire me with that generous

fervour which alone can render the soul secure and purify it from its many sins and infidelities. "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin.—Immaculate Virgin, Mother of mercy, and Refuge of sinners, take pity on my wretchedness and many miseries; obtain for me a victory over that tepidity which is so full of danger, that it may not be to me a cause of perdition: thus will thy assistance at the hour of death be truly effectual.

Invoke also, religious soul, St. Joseph and your other holy patrons, and resolve now on that unfailing contest against tepidity which alone can secure you against an unhappy death. "Hail, holy Queen," &c.

LECTURE

On self-denial or mortification.

IN the lecture on the spirit of the religious state it has been shown that it leads to the highest eminence of every virtue; but an essential means for the acquisition and maintenance of that spirit is to be sought in the practice of self-denial or mortification. Our Divine Lord and Teacher has declared that the first step in the effort to follow Him is made by that means: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."* "These words appear hard to many," observes A'Kempis; "but far more terrible will it be to hear that dreadful final sentence, "Depart from me, you accursed, into eternal fire." "Jesus has now many who love and aspire to his celestial kingdom," writes the same admirable author, "but few that are disposed to carry his cross. All wish to rejoice with Christ, but few are willing to bear any affliction for Him." But "those who now hear and follow the invitation of the cross shall not then fear the sentence of eternal perdition."† The same experienced spiritualist declares, in the same chapter, that the spirit of the cross is a source of happiness even in this life; and that, according to St. Paul, our sufferings here are not "worthy to be compared to the glory to come that shall

* Matt. xvi. 24.

† "Imit." B. II., ch. xi. xii.

be revealed in us.”* He says : “ When you have reached that point that trials become agreeable to you, and are pleasing for the love of Jesus Christ, then think that you are fortunate, for you have found a paradise on earth.”

Self-denial or mortification is exercised in a variety of ways. It is most usually understood to signify corporal austerities, fasting, and other external macerations of the body; but it equally refers to the control of the senses, the passions, and the moral affections and powers of the soul. Corporal austerities are the lowest in degree, though to a certain extent essential and indispensable for many. The words of St. Paul sufficiently attest their necessity : “ But the sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God : for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand.”† Our animal propensities are opposed to all spirituality, and they must be subdued or eradicated. Holy men hate their bodies ; they look on them as traitors that are ever prepared to deliver them to the enemy. “ And every one,” says St. Paul, “ that striveth for the mastery abstaineth himself from all things ; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown ; but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run not as at an uncertainty : I so fight, not as one beating the air ; but I chastise my body and bring it under subjection, lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others I myself should become a cast-away.”‡

In former ages the members of religious communities bound themselves to the observance of rigorous austerities. Their lives were devoted almost entirely to contemplation and prayer, and corporal strength was a matter of secondary

* Rom. viii. 18.

† 1 Cor. ii. 14.

‡ 1 Cor. ix. 25, 26, 27.

importance. In modern times religious are for the most part engaged in preaching the Gospel, in the duty of educating the young, or in corporal works of charity; and it is essential to preserve to a great extent the vigour of the body and uninterrupted health. In consequence, the habits of corporal austerities have been much relaxed in the Church in order to promote the exercise of virtues of a more perfect kind, and to secure to a greater extent the salvation of souls. Another reason, for which it is not easy to account, has arisen for this relaxation, and it seems to be the opinion of men of the medical profession that it tends to increase as the world advances in age; it consists in a diminution of vigour in the human constitution, observed since the commencement of the present century (perhaps even before it) in some, if not all, of the nations of Europe, and arising from change of food or habits of life. It may even arise from a deterioration in the productions of the earth. In the Apocalypse, one of the plagues resulting from the wrath of God is described as including the destruction or deterioration of the fruits of the earth, as a like deterioration is supposed to have taken place at the time of the universal deluge; and the increase of impiety and crime in modern Europe is certainly sufficient to occasion any amount of severity on the part of heaven. Whatever may be the cause, the effect is generally believed to exist, and relaxations in the penitential fasts and abstinence ordained by the Church have, in consequence, been allowed: a diminution in the rigours formerly exercised in the religious orders would, of course, be also required. In any case, the mortification and subjugation of the passions and evil inclinations in the soul

by internal self-denial, and the control of the senses is always both more important and more extensive in its effects. Corporal austerities are directed to the subjugation of one class only of vicious inclinations, those connected with the body and animal indulgence; internal mortification tends to correct and eradicate all the other passions—pride, covetousness, anger, envy, and sloth—and the control of the senses enables us to avoid the innumerable evils arising from the abuse of the eyes, the ears, and the tongue. As the important points of health and strength of body depend so much on corporal austerities, these should never be exercised except with the consent and under the control of religious superiors and spiritual directors: especially by young or inexperienced persons, who are liable, through mere indiscretion or the artifices of the enemy, to exceed in this respect, and to expose to danger not only the well-being of their bodies but even of their souls.

The motives for the exercise of self-denial or mortification are also various. It is directed, in the first place, to atonement for sin. 2. By it the passions are controlled and rendered subject to reason, and Satan is deprived of the most dangerous weapons that he employs. 3. Self-will is subdued. 4. High and perfect virtues are acquired and exercised. 5. Evil and imperfect habits are corrected and eradicated. 6. Great and often extraordinary favours are obtained from heaven. In this lecture the subject shall be treated chiefly with a view to the removal of evil and imperfect habits, the acquisition of virtues, and progress in spiritual life.

Both virtues and vices are habits, and are equally liable

to be increased by exercise. Habits are acquired by the repetition of acts ; virtues of all descriptions are confirmed and perfected by acts of each : vicious and imperfect habits are intensified and rendered inveterate by repeated indulgence. Self-denial affords the indispensable means by which the latter are corrected and eradicated, and the former consolidated and rendered more perfect. It is a truth universally admitted and confirmed by the experience of mankind, that habits become, in a measure, a second nature. This universal axiom is exemplified to a wonderful extent in the training of various animals, which are thus rendered extremely useful to the human race. It is yet more manifested in the education of the young in every respect, and in the acquisition of the innumerable arts of every kind which are exercised by men. In what a remarkable manner is this exemplified in the ordinary arts of reading and writing ! A person who has acquired the art of reading, takes a book in his hand, opens it, and casts his eye on the page. Before he had learned to read, that page would have presented to him merely a certain measure of paper covered with a variety of marks in red or black ink, that conveyed nothing intelligible to his mind. At present they contain for him knowledge of various kinds, as clearly indicated as it is in the objects which surround him in the world or in the words spoken by those with whom he converses. He comprehends what is represented in the book as instantaneously and as perfectly as if the ideas were conveyed by the sight of the objects described or by words spoken to his ear. The art of reading has become to him, as it were, natural, and it might be supposed that he possessed it from his very

birth. He knows, however, and men generally at present know, the laborious and even painful, or at least unpleasant, course of exertion by which he acquired the art. At first he was obliged to learn the alphabet, and impress indelibly on his memory the form of the letters, as also the exact sound which each conveys to the ear. He then was taught to combine those letters two or more together, and form syllables. He next learned to combine the syllables, and form words; and at length, by repeated exertions, he acquired the art of reading with facility. It is now for him a second nature, and a source of endless delight and utility. The art of writing is acquired in a manner somewhat similar. The art, however, which verifies in the most perfect and remarkable manner the truth which I desire to convey, is that of music. Observe an accomplished musician seated at his instrument. He may perform for an hour or two, or for a longer space of time. He sounds many thousands of notes and fractions of notes, with many varieties of time and emphasis, and never commits a perceptible error. Whence is this admirable skill, so calculated to afford delight both to the performer and to those who hear? Is it a gift of nature? Alas! all well know that it is not. The musician well knows the amount not only of laborious and tedious application, but of self-denial that it has cost him to arrive at the perfection of his art which he has reached. A far less expenditure of time, of labour, and of mortification would probably have rendered him a saint of eminent perfection, and have secured him a high place among the musicians who proclaim the glory of the Most High around his throne. And how, it is useful to inquire, has the musician

acquired his wondrous skill and become so secure against every failure and defect? He can call to mind a time when he could not sound a single note correctly. Merely by sounding the notes with care, attention, and perseverance, he has acquired the perfection of his art. It is by similar means that all religious are to learn to avoid their defects, to think, to act, and pray with perfection; to lay aside all their evil and imperfect habits, in fine, and to render the exercise of the highest virtues a second nature. The habit of self-denial, and with it and by its means the habits of every virtue, may be acquired by the repetition of the necessary acts, and by the same process every evil and imperfect habit may be corrected and removed by acts of a contrary nature. For the manner in which this is to be done we have the advantage of the direction of several of the most eminent masters in spiritual life. St. Ignatius of Loyola, in his work of *Spiritual Exercises*, when describing the practice of the particular examen, gives directions for the manner of numbering and noting down the faults committed, and acts of virtue are marked in a similar manner. St. Alphonsus Liguori, in his book named "*The Nun Sanctified*," as also Fr. Rodriguez, in his "*Treatise on Christian Perfection*," suggest innumerable acts which may be elicited. Some of the most obvious acts of self-denial regard the senses. The eyes and ears are mortified by the repression of curiosity, which is so great an enemy to recollection of mind and so constant as well as so dangerous a source of temptation. The tongue is mortified by silence, to which such great importance is attached in all religious bodies. The palate and sense of feeling are included in what has been said on

corporal austerities. It is sufficient to observe here, in addition, that without proceeding to any degree of rigour regarding the palate, a great and most salutary species of mortification may be exercised in the due observance of temperance, in the choice of the plainest kinds of food, and the rejection of such as flatter the appetite, as also in avoiding unnecessary condiments and gratifications of a minor description. Health and corporal vigour, far from being injured or diminished, are promoted in a great degree when judicious self-denial has retrenched all superfluities, and reduced both the quantity and quality of refection to what is merely necessary and salutary to the constitution.

Acts of self-denial directed to the subjugation of the passions or the exercise of virtues may be either internal in the mind and soul or manifested exteriorly. It should be observed, however, that the external act depends entirely for its merit and value on the sincerity and fervour of the internal spirit by which it is dictated. When both are combined, as they should be, when possible, the act will be, of course, more perfect and effectual. It must generally, if not always, occur that the same act tends at the same time to the removal of an evil habit and to the exercise and increase of a good habit or virtue; and it will also be found that for beginners in spiritual life every act of virtue in general will be also an act of self-denial, because attended with difficulty, in consequence of the resistance of corrupt nature. As the soul advances in virtue this resistance gradually diminishes, until it totally disappears; and when virtue has reached perfection it is exercised with ease and delight, as is observed in the arts of music, reading, and others.

These observations, being more or less general and vague, could not be productive of much utility for the acquisition of habits of self-denial unless some systematic procedure be suggested for practice. Such a mode of action, therefore, shall be described a little later : it has been found eminently successful when adopted, and it can be recommended with confidence. It should always be remembered that the acquisition of habits of self-denial is attended and impeded by two obstacles, both difficult to remove. The first arises from self-love and the natural tenderness with respect to their own feelings experienced by all mankind. From these universal affections of the mind arises a dread or horror of mortification, self-affliction or denial ; it seems to many, at first, as a cutting or rending of one's own members. The second difficulty is of a very peculiar nature, and if not evaded often becomes a source of even greater evils than the former. It consists of that indiscreet ardour, incident to energetic and enthusiastic souls, which leads them to undertake difficult things that are beyond their strength, and to make efforts at the outset of exertion in which they cannot persevere. Want of self-knowledge and experience betrays many into this indiscretion, and the enemy of souls endeavours constantly to promote it, being well aware of its consequences. The incautious person who has been led into this error, impelled at first by the impetus of his enthusiasm and fervour, and aided by those spiritual consolations granted usually at the commencement of spiritual life, undertakes high things, and imposes on himself observances of great severity and rigour, of which he may have read or heard, and which are suited only to those who are far advanced

and long inured to austerity. He soon, however, discovers that the burden is too heavy for him; he becomes embittered and discouraged, imagines that self-denial is intolerable, and conceives such a horror for it that it may be impossible to induce him ever again to submit to it. It may even occur that he will abandon entirely the practice of virtue and piety, and seek to indemnify himself by sensual indulgence for the temporary pain he has endured. In a safe and practical system of self-denial both these difficulties must be carefully avoided or overcome.

The first must be combated by instruction, and the young religious must be taught what self-denial and mortification really are. The young horse, when frightened by any object, is corrected and quieted by being brought near to it and forced to look steadily at it. In like manner, those who enter on spiritual life must be made to know self-denial, and fully to comprehend its necessity, its advantages, and inestimable fruits: they must, as far as possible, be caused to estimate, love, and desire it. The first and indispensable means for this purpose is to be sought in meditation and prayer. Experience proves that one of the first effects of mental prayer is an incipient desire of self-denial. Mental prayer discovers to the soul the foulness of sin, with its dread effects, and at the same time the perfections of God and the beauties of virtue. The effect of this knowledge is an immediate desire to purify itself by penance, to atone for past offences against its Creator, and to render itself pleasing to Him. This desire must be encouraged, fostered, and confirmed by instruction. The indispensable nature of self-denial is proved by the words of Eternal Truth already cited: "If

any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For he that will save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul ?”* In fact, the novitiate of religious life is a school of self-denial ; and this art of arts, by which every virtue is acquired, by which the love and favour of God are merited and obtained, and the treasures of heaven are secured for eternity, can be learned in great perfection with a far less expenditure of time, restraint, labour, and endurance than the profane knowledge which is so much prized, but the fruits of which are confined to this transient world.

As is usual in the acquisition of every art, so in forming the habit of self-denial it is necessary to begin with what is easy. The first acts must be those which are least painful and difficult to nature, and they must also be comparatively few. The following system, as has been indicated, has been adopted with great success. Let the aspirant to high virtue commence with a few acts each day—say three. At the end of a week let him add another, and during the second week let the acts be four each day. During the third week they should be five, in the fourth week they should be six, in the fifth week seven, and they should increase in the same proportion until they amount, more or less, to ten in the day. It will often be advisable with those who are not of the most fervent disposition, to suspend here the further increase in the number of acts until those undertaken have become familiar and habitual.

* Matt. xvi. 24, 25, 26.

After some time the increase of acts should be renewed, and the acts themselves should become gradually more important and severe, until the number is found to amount to twenty in the day. Another change is also recommended, that an act should be added, not each week, but each month. It is to be observed that when the acts coincide with those of the particular examen they may serve for both ends and need not be repeated. It may be well also to note, that in this system the danger of indiscretion in assuming practices of self-denial of too severe a kind can be totally avoided.

Up to the point when the daily number of acts of self-denial are confined to ten, the nature of the acts are usually of the easiest kind, and such as even by ordinary Christians in the world are constantly practised : they are such, in fact, that if they be omitted sin will often be the consequence. They are such, in the first place, as are necessary to regulate the senses and gradually diminish the tendency to the indulgence of sensuality and of animal appetite. At the risk of some repetition, the following remarks may be made :—The acts will be those that regulate the eyes, and check that curiosity that so constantly leads to sin ; they will also regulate the sense of hearing—another channel for curiosity, which is often a source of faults against others. The rule of silence adopted in all religious orders is a great means for preventing such sins, and its observance requires the self-denial both of the ears and of the tongue. The palate, the organ of the sense of taste, requires in a very particular manner to be restrained and reduced to rule. It has such influence with regard to health and strength, that it

demands great discretion in the means for subduing it : a great amount of self-denial may still be exercised without detracting in the least from what may be necessary or really useful. All thoughts of sensuality in this respect out of the time of repast may assuredly be dispensed with without injury ; various kinds of food are injurious to the health, and yet they are often those most pleasing to the palate : to abstain from them is an excellent kind of self-denial. Dainties, rich sauces, and condiments, may often, if not always, be safely dispensed with. No person, moreover, could possibly be injured by offering one small morsel as an act of self-denial during his repast. The other acts of self-denial which it may be advisable to treat of here regard the subjugation of the passions, especially pride. Acts of humility, in the first place, often coincide with the dictates of good breeding, and are often adopted by the votaries of the world, even through a motive of vanity. A proud man will often take the lowest place, and give precedence to others whom he looks on as inferiors, because the rules of politeness require it. This gave occasion to the remark of St. Bernard, that humility must indeed be a great and beautiful virtue, as pride lowers itself so far as to imitate it. When the choice of the lower place has connected with it some sacrifice of self-indulgence, or of convenience, the act becomes a two-fold exercise of mortification and doubly meritorious, and such acts are frequently performed by the proud children of the world. How promptly, then, should such occasions for acts of virtue be seized by religious souls ! Poverty of spirit eradicates the passion of covetousness, and occasions for the exercise of that virtue continually occur in

religious life. The passion of anger is opposed to meekness and the spirit of fraternal charity, and these are two virtues which should be conspicuous in every true religious. There are, perhaps, scarcely any virtues in which the effects of self-denial and its victory over passion can be more clearly observed and marked. It can frequently be asserted of religious persons whom natural temperament or early habit may have rendered choleric and prone to anger, that they have changed their natural character: self-denial has given them such self-command that they never betray a tendency to anger; and it might seem that they are by nature phlegmatic and constitutionally mild. Sloth is, perhaps, the passion with which the religious and the Christian have most constantly to contend: of course the word is here employed in a spiritual sense principally. In this sense it is the parent of tepidity, which is the canker-worm of religious fervour, virtue, and perfection. It is against this offspring of self that the spirit of self-denial has to contend during life however long, in order that neither sickness, nor weariness, nor sorrow, nor persecution, nor pain, nor yet the tediousness of protracted age, may cause the soul to relax in the divine service: "He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved."* When the number of acts has reached twenty no further numerical increase need be adopted, because that number will require the habitual mortification of every evil and imperfect habit, and the exercise of every virtue. If that number, or near that number of acts, be not performed daily by those who adopt this system, their souls will

* Matt. x. 22.

never arrive at perfect and universal self-denial ; they will remain at best but half-mortified, and subject to many defects of greater or less magnitude. When the aspirant to perfection has spent some considerable time, say a year, in the practice of twenty acts of self-denial each day, he will find realized in his soul what has been stated : mortification will have lost all its bitterness and all its difficulty ; it will have become a second nature ; he will find himself in the position of the perfect reader or musician : he can cease from numbering his acts, and resolve to deny himself and do whatever is most contrary to his own will, whenever the exercise of perfect virtue demands it. Those who have the courage to adopt this practice, and exercise this eminence of self-control, find themselves at once rewarded invariably by heaven in an extraordinary manner. They observe that their souls become continually immersed, as it were, in an ocean of heavenly peace and consolation, and in the enjoyment of the sweetest spiritual delight. This will continue until the Divine Spirit may decree to purify their souls by further trial or probation, or until some cause induces a change. This state of the soul is noticed by earlier masters in spiritual life, and experience confirms at present what they have taught. It is expedient, however, to add a final remark regarding the system just described. It is, that with young and timid persons great care is to be taken to avoid discouragement, and it may be often advisable to diminish the number of acts, or retard their increase.

The soul will be rewarded with advantages yet more inestimable. At this point of its spiritual advancement it will find itself secure against every deliberate sin, however

small ; its faults will be confined to those which are but half-deliberate, or faults of surprise ; and these will be deplored with a sincerity and depth of contrition that will speedily cancel them in the ineffably pure eyes of God. The passions will at the same time be effectually subdued and reduced to control, the traitors of the soul and associates of our spiritual enemy will be deprived of their power to injure, the conflicts and storms of temptation will be at an end, and the soul will be established in a solid and enduring peace. Trials, probations, and crosses there must be : the soul needs them for its merit, advancement, and security, and the Divine Spirit will never allow them to be wanting in due proportion, and at the congruous time, but yet “ the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, will rule the soul, and keep the heart and mind in Christ Jesus.”* The senses will be regulated and preserved from all inordinate indulgence, and the eyes, ears and tongue will cease to accumulate continual defilement on the conscience. Those virtues, implied in what are termed the eight beatitudes, will have been in a great measure acquired, and the celestial treasures which they indicate will be laid up daily by the soul. Poverty of spirit and humility will confirm their claim continually to the kingdom of heaven ; meekness and patience will constantly give new titles to it ; the spirit of compunction will entitle the soul to spiritual consolations, and its purity of heart will induce God to disclose to it the sanctifying light of His presence. Its self-denial, its virtues, and its efficacious prayers will render productive its efforts for the salvation of souls, and its benedictions as a peace-maker

* Phil. iv. 7.

will be those of the favourite children of God. It will ever be prepared to suffer persecution for justice' sake; and, to sum up all, its perfect obedience to the divine law will render it a dwelling-place for the Adorable Trinity. "If any man love me," says our Lord, "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him."*

This happy state of the truly and fully mortified soul is continually confirmed, nurtured, and perfected by the spirit and practice of prayer, as shall be described in the lecture on that subject, and it lives on as the just man described in the Divine Word: "The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day."† Its life is no longer the sinful life of the natural man: all its natural and corrupt inclinations and affections are overcome and subdued; its views and motives of action are all directed to God; it can say with St. Paul: "I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me;"‡ every act is an act of the love and service of God, in conformity with the intention of creation. The state of such a soul with respect to self-denial is very peculiar. The macerations of the body may, of course, be exercised in any degree of rigour that health, strength, and obedience may permit, in order to increase merit or obtain favours from God, but the pain which they usually occasion has, to a great extent, disappeared through the effects of habit. The mortification of the senses, the passions and internal affections of the mind have undergone a far greater change, and it has been said by those who had experience: "I formerly counted such things as acts of mortification, but I can no

* John, xiv. 23.

† Prov. iv. 18.

‡ Gal. ii. 20

longer do so: they cost me nothing." Humiliations, reproaches, and privations are often sources of pleasure rather than pain. The modern history of the eastern missions affords us a very edifying and noteworthy example. A late missionary, in writing to a friend and describing his apprehension by the emissaries of the persecutors, states that, when entering one of the direful prisons, which so closely resemble the dens of wild beasts, and in which the hapless captives endure such horrors, he laughed to himself with secret joy at the anticipation of all that he was to undergo, while his guard imagined, of course, that he was deeply plunged in despair. The mortified soul has found that paradise on earth alluded to in the book of "The Imitation of Christ": "When you have reached that point, that tribulation is pleasing to you, and acceptable for the sake of Christ, then believe that you are fortunate, for you have found a paradise on earth."* Now it is that the words of Jesus Christ are truly verified: "Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light."† The soul can live a crucified life, and rejoice at every pain, every suffering, and privation. There is no person who does not experience the truth of the words of the admirable A'Kempis: "This mortal life is full of miseries, and entirely surrounded by crosses,"‡ Sometimes we suffer in consequence of the divine will, sometimes we are tried by the malice and imperfections of our fellow-creatures, we yet more frequently become the cause of humiliation and affliction to ourselves; but whatever may be the nature

* Imit. B. II. c. 12.

† Matt. xi. 29, 30.

‡ Imit. B. II. c. 12.

or cause of our sufferings; they may always be converted into merit and celestial rewards by enduring them with patience, and offering them to God in union with the sufferings of our Redeemer. Perhaps there is no prayer more acceptable before the throne of mercy than that of some pious souls on meeting with crosses: "Divine Lord Jesus, I thank Thee for this cross, and I offer it to Thee with thy own heavy Cross for all the intentions of thy Sacred Heart."

There is another peculiarity of inestimable value in the state of the soul which we contemplate. In consequence of the absence of opposition from self-will, which has been subdued, the soul enjoys perfect liberty, and can choose its own course without any internal obstacle; it is, therefore, in a position to choose on all occasions the mode of action which it may judge to be most perfect and pleasing to God. It might, therefore, with security form the resolution to do so whenever circumstances may permit, and after the lapse of sufficient time for probation, even confirm their resolution by a vow.

It remains merely to be observed that when the religious, after a steady and courageous contest, endured for years, against its spiritual enemies of every kind, has subdued them as far as is possible in this life, and won a comparative state of peace and tranquillity, such as has been described, it is no longer necessary to seek for new occasions for self-denial. As the people of Israel in the Land of Promise it has vanquished its enemies, it has won its dominion, and it has merely to defend it, and maintain itself in peace. It must be careful, however, not to relapse into habits of self-indulgence, or allow the enemies which it has subdued to recover strength, to domineer, or expose it to danger.

Fourth Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the Particular Judgment after Death.

1 *Point.* The court and persons usually represented as present.

2 *Point.* The universality of the judgment.

3 *Point.* The severity of the judgment.

Preparatory Prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude.* Imagine yourself before your Judge.

2 *Prelude.* "O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight no man living shall be justified."*

1 *Point.* The court and persons present. The first is the criminal,—your own soul—which, on the moment of leaving the body, will stand in the presence of the Eternal Judge. Imagine that hour present. You are covered with your sins as a leprosy. "You have perpetrated us," as St. Bernard says, "and we will not leave you." What shame! What horror! What dread! There you stand, that have so studiously concealed your guilt from the eyes

* Ps. cxlii. 2.

of men. Where is now your pride? Where your self-esteem? Where those arts by which self-love veiled over your sins and defects? All dissipated as a mist before the dread light that is shed around you. As if a sunbeam fell on each, your shameful defects are brought forth to view before the all-holy eyes of your Creator, your Redeemer, and your Judge. You wish to fly, to hide yourself in the caverns of the earth, perhaps even in the depths of hell; but no, you cannot; "there is none that can rescue you from his hand."* Near you stand the demons by whose delusions you have been ruined. They exult over you; they deride with hideous laughter your confusion; they blaspheme the Divine Judge, while they stretch forth their dread arms to seize you as their victim. Opposite stand your good angel and those of your companions, friends, pupils, or others whom you have scandalized, perverted, or led into sin. You have neglected the admonitions of the Holy Spirit, and become the enemy of Him with whose love they are inflamed; and now they are filled with zeal to avenge his Majesty. They accuse you with unrelenting rigour. The Judge sits before you in terrific majesty. "O Lord! whither shall I flee from thy face?† He is an all-seeing Judge; He knows all your guilt; in his presence you have sinned, and before his divine eyes. He is a Judge infinitely just. Once He was all mercy. He died for love of you; but you have outraged his love, presumed on his mercy, trampled on his blood. He has laid aside mercy and assumed the terrors of his justice: pardon for the least offence is now

* Deut. xxxii. 39.

† Ps. cxxxviii. 7.

impossible. He is a rigorous, angry Judge. It is his law that has been violated, his graces have been abused, his holiness offended, and He is now prepared to seek retribution for all. He is an Omnipotent Judge, who can punish the offender to the full extent of his guilt. Such is the court. What sentence, O religious! have you reason to expect? Judge yourself now with rigour, that you may not be condemned at that perilous hour.

2 *Point*. The universality of the judgment. Before the court, as meditated, the trial will be instantaneous, but as detailed as if it should consume years. All your obligations will be set forth to view. The Gospel will be opened with its two great precepts: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, . . . and thy neighbour as thyself." Your baptismal vows will be expanded before your view. "Dost thou renounce Satan? I renounce him. And all his works? I renounce them. And all his pomps? I renounce them." The obligations of your state will be detailed, as a Christian, religious, superior, subject, teacher, pupil, and your conduct compared with all. Alas! shall it be found that you have violated all; that in place of proving your love for your Creator by keeping his commandments you have constantly departed from them; that perhaps there is scarce one of his precepts, or of those of his Church, that you have not transgressed? Shall it be seen that your renunciation of Satan has been deceitful and merely nominal; that you have listened to his temptations, wrought his works, and loved his pomps more than God and his service; that such violations of your vows have been habits long indulged? All the years, and days, and hours of your life will be reviewed,

and scarce one will be found, perhaps, that will not be marked by sin. Look back on your life and ask yourself what judgment you may expect. You have offended by every power of your mind, by every affection of your heart, by every sense of your body, by thought, by word, by deed, and omission. Your life has been constantly marked by sin of greater or less deformity.

3 *Point.* The severity of the judgment. Every circumstance will be taken into account that can increase the guilt of sin and deepen its shades on the soul. “Weight and balance are the judgments of God.”* As a Christian and a member of the true Church you will be judged more severely than the infidel or the heretic; as enlightened and educated you will be compared with the ignorant, who are so constant in their faith and so ardent in their love of God. You have the means of tending to the perfection of piety and virtue: you will be compared with those who have lived in times or countries where those means have been wanting. You are a religious, and bound to aspire to perfect virtue: you are a teacher, advanced in years, a guardian of the young; you will be confronted with your pupils and tender wards. The scandal given by you, the want of edification, the sins arising from your neglect, example, command, or co-operation will all be numbered and weighed. “Weight and balance are the judgments of God.” “I will search Jerusalem in lamps.”† Many sins, the existence of which you do not suspect, sins occasioned by you in others, sins long forgotten, will be added to the many you are con-

* Prov. xvi. 11.

† Soph. i. 12.

scious of and remember in a confused manner, but which you cannot number or detail, and which your tongue cannot recount. David prays: "From my secret ones, cleanse me, O Lord: and from the sins of others spare thy servant."* Then will be remembered the graces you have rejected or abused, the holy things you have profaned, the Masses you have carelessly offered or heard, the prayers said without fervour, the sacraments badly received, the good works vitiated. "I will judge justices."† How truly may you ask, "Wretch, what shall I say, when the just shall scarce be secure?"

Colloquy to your Redeemer and Judge.—Oh! merciful Redeemer and Judge of the living and the dead, condemn me not at that dread hour. Remember now, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and grant me grace to prepare; for when that hour shall come thy justice alone can be heard, and Thou canst not spare. At that dread moment every unexpiated crime shall be written, as it were, on my forehead, and there shall be no room for pardon; no supplication can have effect. "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped: let me never be confounded."‡ "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: Thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow."§ Remember, O Lord, the torments Thou hast suffered and the blood Thou hast shed for me. Hear now my humble and contrite prayer; at the dread hour of judgment Thou canst not receive petitions, and no repentance can avail.

* Ps. xviii. 13.

† Ps. lxxiv. 3.

‡ Ps. xxx. 2.

§ Ps. i. 9.

EXAMEN OF THE INTERIOR.

On Temptations, their sources, and mode of resisting them.

Is my soul assailed by any dangerous or importunate temptations? Are they all from the enemy: the roaring lion that never ceases to “seek whom he may devour?” Had he no traitors within the fortress of your soul to favour him, to repel and defeat him would be an easy task. St. Peter again teaches: “Resist the devil and he will fly from you.” He is a coward with those who resist with vigilance and courage. The real danger arises from the internal traitor. Religious soul, be careful to know and keep your eye upon him. Who are the traitors from whom I have most to fear? Is pride the leader? It is often the case. Am I tempted ever to prefer myself?—to seek distinction?—the first place?—exemptions? Am I self-willed?—unwilling to submit or to be ruled?—am I easily offended or inclined to contend? The defence against this enemy is to be sought in humility. Is my ruling inclination to live without trouble or inconvenience?—to want for nothing?—to live pleasantly here and go on without suffering to heaven? It is not possible, according to the “Imitation of Christ.” You cannot indulge in earthly enjoyments and afterwards reign with Christ! Is my predominant failing sensuality? For these low inclinations the remedy is to be found in self-denial. The same is to be said of sloth and tepidity. I must learn from our Lord to hate myself and to love his cross. Am I tempted to discouragement and want of confidence in God? My resource lies in prayer. I must accept his

invitation who has said: "Come to me all you who labour and are burdened and I will refresh you."*

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the General Judgment.

1 *Point.* The signs that will precede the general judgment: its cause and motive.

2 *Point.* The circumstances of the judgment.

3 *Point.* The sentences of the just and the unjust.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude.* Imagine the last dread wreck of the universe. The sun and moon are extinguished; the stars fall from the heavens. Rivers of fire consume the earth. Hear the dread trumpet sound. Behold the universal human race, whether bright with glory or dark and foul with crime, hastening to the valley of Josaphat.

2 *Prelude.* Renew your prayer: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight no man living shall be justified."†

1. *Point.* The signs that will precede the general judgment: its cause and motive in the views of God. The material universe has been formed by God as the temporal habitation of the human race, whom He created for the manifestation of his glory. At a certain period, determined and fixed in his divine mind, the transient existence of human creatures is to cease, and this universe, which serves as the theatre for the display of the material operations of his attributes will have an end. Those wondrous luminaries which proclaim his glory in the heavens will be extinguished. He will stretch forth, as it were, his omnipotent

* Matt. xi. 28.

† Ps. cxlii. 2.

hand and remove the great orbs; and the stars, as described in his prophetic word, shall fall from heaven in a shower, as the fruit of the olive-tree when shaken by a potent wind. Rivers of fire shall then begin to flow from the four quarters of the globe and shall consume the earth, while nations and people shall shriek and howl to each other, as described by holy writers, and men shall wither away with fear. The prophet Sophonias thus describes the terrors of that day: "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and exceeding swift: the voice of the day of the Lord is bitter, the mighty men shall there meet with tribulation. That day is a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds, a day of the trumpet and alarm."* The day of the last judgment is called by the prophet, the day of the Lord, because the Creator on that day will wind up, in the presence of all intellectual creation, of heaven and earth, the system of his providence, and explain its mysteries with regard to the human race. Then the variety observable in the conditions of men will be reconciled with justice, and it will appear why some live in the enjoyment of power, wealth, and splendour, while others are doomed to poverty, subjection, and obscurity: why some, like Dives, superabound in the midst of enjoyment, while others, like Lazarus, are victims of disease and suffering. It will be of yet greater importance to explain to all intelligent beings the reasons for the inequality of the gifts of grace and faith—why millions are illumined with the

* Soph. i. 14, 15, 16.

full glow of celestial truth and knowledge, and live and move in that divine light, shed on the earth by Him “who is the true Light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world;”* while a far greater number sit “in darkness and the shadow of death.”† Even among Christians, the diversity of those heavenly gifts will require to be explained, and those more favoured will have to answer for the graces lost and abused. The well-instructed will be compared with the ignorant, the priest with the layman, the religious with the secular, and then will be verified the words of our Lord, the “first shall be last and the last first.” Then shall the tepid in religion answer for the graces lavished on them and abused, while many want knowledge essential for salvation.

2 *Point.* The circumstances attending the last judgment. Every individual of the human race, from Adam and his consort Eve, to the last human being created, shall hear the penetrating sound of the Archangel’s trumpet, and, wheresoever their dust shall have been scattered, they shall be aroused and compelled to hasten to the appointed vale. From the sands of the desert, from the bowels of the earth, from the lowest depths of the ocean, they shall be collected, the just radiant with light and beauty, the wicked dark, foul, diseased and disgusting to behold. My littleness will not conceal me. On one side will appear the dark legions of the demons, hovering on their gloomy wings around the open mouth of the infernal pit, the bellying of the flames of which shall be heard by all. In the heavens shall appear the sign of the Son of Man, the

* John, i. 9.

† Ps. lxxxvii. 7.

Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, beaming with the glory of a thousand suns, and followed by the innumerable host of heaven ; and then shall be seen by all intellectual creation the Eternal Judge, seated on clouds of uncreated glory, his eyes beaming with divine majesty. The books shall then be opened. “And I saw,” says the Apostle, in the Apocalypse, “a great white throne, and one sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heavens fled away, and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened ; and another book was opened, which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged by those things that were written in the books, according to their works.”* And now, religious soul, contemplate the page which is turned. It contains the records of your life, good and evil, works of darkness and of light. How do those records appear ? Are the works of evil erased and obliterated ; or do they still appear dark, odious, and abominable before the eyes of the all-seeing Judge and of all creation, of angels and of men, superior, equal, and inferior ? Oh, what an hour of shame and horror ! Then shall sinners be prepared to cry “to the mountains, cover us, and to the hills, fall upon us.”† They shall desire to fly, but in vain ; they will have but one refuge, the eternal pit of fire. Oh, religious ! labour now to purify your soul. It will then be beyond your power. “My brethren,” said St. Austin, “if I felt secure, I would exhort you to banish all fear ; but I tremble at the thought of hell.”

3 *Point*. The separation of the good and bad : the sen-

* Apoc. xx. 12.

† Osee, x. 8.

tences of both. Then the angels shall go forth and separate the just from the unjust. What anguish, what despair shall then be witnessed! What shrieks of agony shall be heard! Then shall the friend be eternally separated from his friend, the brother from his brother, the sister from the sister, the child from its parent, the one to reign for ever in the kingdom of light, and glory, and felicity, the other to dwell in torments, darkness, and despair. The just shall be placed on the right hand of the Judge, and shall fill the space between heaven and earth; the reprobate shall stand on his left, near the opening of the infernal pit. Then shall He pronounce the irrevocable sentence: "Come," will he say, addressing the just, "you blessed of my Father."* Come from the dwelling of guilt, of tears and sorrow, to the abode of peace and rest. That creative voice was once heard: "Be light made," and that pellucid flood was poured from heaven which clothes the material creation in light and beauty. With what a torrent of celestial delight will it deluge the souls of the just at that moment! "Possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."† Come to share the kingdom of your heavenly Father, and to reign with Him for ever. Then will they become radiant with celestial splendour and prepare to unite with the angelic choirs. The wicked, in rage, disappointment, and despair, will behold their glory with anguish. "These are they," shall they say, "whom we had some time in derision and for a parable of reproach. . . . Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints."‡

* Matt. xxv. 34,

† Ib.

‡ Wisd. v. 3, 5.

Then shall their own dread sentence be pronounced: “Depart from me, you accursed.” Depart! Whither and from whence? Depart from your Creator’s presence, from the bosom of your eternal parent; depart from heaven, from the abode of peace, and rest, and glory, and felicity; depart, you accursed. Oh! is it not sufficient to be cast off from God? but to be blighted by his curse for ever! Oh, dreadful fate! The patriarch Noe cursed his son. Thousands of years have passed away, but yet the effects of that paternal malediction can be observed even now. And the curse of the Omnipotent, with what weight shall it rest on the bosoms of the reprobate to endless ages! Depart into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.* Which of these two sentences, oh, religious soul, do you desire to hear? Now is the time to choose, while your fate is in your own hands. The lot is to be decided by a life of fervent love and service of your Creator; nothing else can render you secure.

Colloquy to your Redeemer and Judge.—O Eternal Judge! “rebuke me not in thy anger, nor chastise me in thy wrath.” Remember, O Lord, that I am thy creature and the work of thy hands. Cast me not off for ever. Remember, also, that I have been redeemed with thy Precious Blood. Let not such a price be spent in vain. Have compassion on my weakness. “Have mercy on me, according to thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity. Wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my iniquity and my sin is always before me. . . . For behold I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did

* Matt. xxv. 41.

my mother conceive me. . . Oh, turn away thy face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create a new heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels. Cast me not away from thy face, and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and confirm me with a perfect spirit." "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed; Thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow."*

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION

On the Observance of Religious Rules.

All the obligations of religious life may be reduced to the observance of the rules in force in each community: all its advantages may be found in that observance. If the religious regulate his conduct by them with perseverance, he cannot fail to be a saint; if he pays no attention to them, he cannot save his soul. Let us ponder this essential duty, and examine into our neglect:—

1 *Point.* The importance of this observance.

2 *Point.* Its advantages.

3 *Point.* The manner of observing our rules.

Preparatory Prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Point.* The importance of observing our rules. It is usually held that the rules in religious bodies bind not under sin. What is the true significance of this admitted maxim? Is it that every rule may be violated without sin? Nothing can be farther from the truth. Some rules cannot be infringed without the commission of

mortal sin; the least can seldom be broken without some fault. The true meaning then is, that the founders of religious orders did not intend, in forming the rules, to superadd any obligation to the law of God, yet neither did they, nor could they, intend to free us from any obligation of that law, or, under the cloak of our rules, to give us greater freedom, by pretending to render innocent the indulgence of passion. If, therefore, through sloth or any inordinate inclination we violate a rule, we are not guilty of sin against the command of our earthly superiors, but we are against the law of God. Many of the rules of religious bodies are but the adaptation of the doctrine of the Gospel to their particular institute. Several of them relate to the observance of the vows. That these bind under sin is evident. Next come those which are intended to secure and facilitate the custody of the vows, by inculcating mortification of the passions and senses, and the avoiding of occasions of sin. All our rules are of importance, as all aid in our search after perfection, especially those which relate to our spiritual duties, religious discipline, and the maintenance of charity: all tend to give edification, and to promote the glory of God and the good of souls. Add to all this that, having received the sanction of the Church, they must be looked upon as the dictates of the Holy Spirit. How rash, then, to neglect them! The religious who would do so could expect nothing but to hear, after an austere life perhaps, and much labour, “in the day of your fast, your own will was found.”*

2 *Point*. The advantages of observing the rules. “We

* Isai. lviii. 3.

are happy, O Israel ! because the things that are pleasing to God are made known to us.”* How inestimable an advantage it is to live in a constant security that you do precisely what God demands of you ! You can then say with your Redeemer, “I do always the things that please Him.”† This is one of the grand features of religious life, in which it excels that of seculars, who, however pious they may be, have often to complain that they know not whether their actions be prudent or pleasing to God. This observance secures the merit of obedience for every action, and obedience is valued by God above every other sacrifice. “For obedience is better than sacrifices.”‡ It keeps the soul from every serious fault ; for, in our anxiety to observe the rule, we keep temptation at a distance. It is a most salutary and easy mode of doing penance for our sins. “The pain is less severe, according to St. Bernard, but more annoying, by duration.” It gives the delights of a good conscience, secures a happy death and a favourable judgment ; it secures perfect virtue, to which it is a short path.

3 *Point.* The manner of observing them. 1. They should be observed with purity of intention in the spirit of the saints, who direct us to proceed in our actions with the spirit of love, and not with the perturbation of fear. We should, then, endeavour to observe our rules, not through fear of being punished for neglect, not through human respect or awe of superiors—such is the spirit of a mercenary—but through a desire to please and glorify God, who sees us, and whom we love. 2. To atone for past sins and

* Baruc. iv. 4.

† John, viii. 29.

‡ 1 Kings, xv. 22.

infidelities, to purify yet more the soul, and render it acceptable to God; to advance always to higher degrees of perfection. 3. With exactness, but without scrupulosity. If we really are inspired with a filial reverence for God, if we really bear Him a sincere love, we should ever be feelingly sensible that our actions can never be sufficiently perfect in his sight, that they can never be worthy of Him. “Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* If such be our spirit, we shall ever be anxious to render more pleasing by obedience every action. He that fears God neglects nothing. On one point which presents a difficulty it will be useful to note, by way of explanation, as follows:—If at any time a rule would cause inconvenience by its observance, and the superior be not within reach, a religious may, pending his permission, and for that occasion, act in contradiction to the rule; but, in order to do so without fault, he must feel convinced that the superior would approve of his action, and he is bound to acquaint him with his conduct as soon as convenient.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Divine Mercy.

- 1 *Point.* Divine mercy abused by despair.
 - 2 *Point.* Divine mercy abused by presumption.
 - 3 *Point.* Divine mercy accepted and triumphant.
- Preparatory prayer:* “My God,” &c.

* Matt. v. 48.

1 *Prelude*. Imagine you behold the prodigal of the Gospel returning and embraced by his father.

2 *Prelude*. Pray with the prophet: "Sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow."*

1 *Point*. Divine mercy abused by despair. As the mercies of God are above all his works, despair or diffidence in his divine mercy must be numbered among those sins most injurious to the majesty of the Creator. The foundation of our hope is the very essence of God. He is essentially beneficent, and having willed our creation, He could form us for no other end than that of happiness. On that foundation is erected the superstructure of the decrees of actual creation, then of redemption. He has actually created man for eternal felicity, and when the human race had been ruined and lost by sin, He redeemed it, and re-opened heaven to it by the blood of his Eternal Son. Next we have the pledges of the inviolable promises of the Eternal. He has promised to hear our prayers: "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find."† He has promised to reward our good works: "A cup of cold water given in his name shall not lose its reward."‡ He has promised a share in his kingdom: above all, He has promised the remission of our sins. "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow."§ He, then, that despairs, doubts in or denies the perfections of God, the end of creation, the sufficiency of redemption, and the promises of God. Despair, as it regards the sinner, is madness. He hangs

* Ps. l. 9.

† Matt. vii. 7.

‡ Id. x. 42.

§ Isai. i. 18.

over the gulf of hell ; mercy holds out a hand to save him and he refuses to take that hand. He imitates Cain and Judas. They were not the crimes of those men in shedding a brother's blood, and in selling that of the Redeemer, that sealed their doom : it was their despair. Compare the crimes of Peter and Judas. Why does the former enjoy his throne in heaven ? Because he sought for mercy. Why is the latter lost ? Because he despaired.

2 *Point.* Divine Mercy abused by presumption. Two classes of sinners offend against Divine Mercy by presumption. The first are heretics or infidels who extol the mercy of God at the expense of his justice, and refuse to believe in eternal punishments. The other is formed of those who delay conversion, and flatter themselves they will always have time. Are such to be found among religious especially consecrated to God ? We cannot suppose that any persevere in gross habits of iniquity ; there are those who remain indurated in tepidity, and who give to their Creator no more than part of their affections and a divided heart. They live in habits of venial sin, sometimes incur mortal sin and live in danger of perdition, allowing themselves to be deluded by the enemy with deceitful suggestions of future conversion. It should be sufficient for the correction of such persons to give them a clear knowledge of the extent of their guilt. Ask them if they are content to be lost ? They will answer : by no means ; but I cannot as yet resolve to reform : I cannot make certain sacrifices to God : I cannot mortify myself to that extent, and I know that He is all mercy, and that He will receive me when I am prepared to return to Him. These words clearly display the dread malice of presumption :

the presumptuous soul permits itself to be encouraged to persevere in its guilt because God is merciful: it converts the wondrous perfection of the Creator into a motive to offend Him. What direful enormity! God, in the meantime, spares to a certain point. He acts towards the tepid as David did towards Absalom. When that unnatural child rebelled against his loving parent, the aged monarch gave charge to his chief warriors, "save for me the boy Absalom." The incorrigible youth, however, carried his guilt to extremity, and was cut off in the fulness of his crimes. Thus God employs, for the correction of the tepid, the authority of their superiors and all the means calculated to revive the influence of grace in their souls; but there is a limit to his forbearance that never can be passed. The patrimony of grace is rich, abundant, and bountiful, but once exhausted it is lost for ever, and perdition, without mercy, is then inevitable for the unhappy soul. Then are verified the terrific words: "I called and you refused: I stretched out my hand. . . . you have despised all my counsel. . . . I will also laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared."*

3 *Point.* Mercy accepted and triumphant. When the sinner hears the sweet invitations of mercy, and resolves to return to God, it matters not what the enormity of his sins may be, he is at once admitted to pardon. He may have sinned as David, Zaccheus, or Magdalen, but he is received with joy and exultation. Even in his sins his Heavenly Father mourns for him and watches for his return. "As

* Prov. i. 24, 26.

I live," said the Lord, "I will not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live. . . . Why will you die, O house of Israel?"* Contemplate the exquisite picture of true conversion and triumphant mercy delineated by Jesus Christ. When the Prodigal Son felt the misery of being separated from his parent and condemned to suffer amid the swine the effects of his guilt and folly, he at once resolves: "I will arise and will go to my Father, and say to him: Father I have sinned against heaven and before Thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." . . . And when he was yet a great way off his Father saw him and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him. . . . And the Father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and make merry: Because this, my son, was dead and he is come to life again; was lost and he is found."† Thus it is that Divine Mercy watches for the return of the truly repentant sinner, and when he appears with humility and self-abasement heaven resounds with hymns of joy at his reception: "there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance."‡

Raise your eyes to heaven and contemplate the vast host of human souls that already appear around the throne of God, robed in their various degrees of splendour; reflect on their condition ere they reached that kingdom of glory into which nothing defiled can enter. How

* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

† Luke, xv. 18.

‡ Ib. xv. 10.

many of them were free from sin? One only among such countless millions was free from guilt. That one was the glorious Queen of Heaven, the Immaculate Mother of the Redeemer, who was preserved by a special privilege from the contamination of sin: all others without exception were stained either with original sin alone, which was sufficient to exclude them from the kingdom of God, or in addition were guilty of a greater or less amount of actual sin. It is mercy alone, therefore, that saves from perdition; mercy alone fills heaven with saints; mercy alone purifies from that guilt which would have rendered companions of the demons those innumerable human souls that reign among the cherubim and seraphim at the foot of the throne of God, radiant with everlasting glory. Among them are many guilty of enormous crimes, but since purified with the blood of the Lamb, and rendered worthy to be numbered among his favourites. There, on a resplendent throne, reigns David, who had been guilty of adultery and murder, and Peter, who thrice denied his Lord and Saviour, and Magdalen, the sinful woman, and the repentant thief, pardoned at the moment of expiring; and, as has been indicated, there is but one among the bright human inmates of heaven that does not owe to the exhaustless mercy of God the beatitude now enjoyed. Even that Immaculate Virgin owes to it her preservation from guilt. Let every tongue then proclaim: "The mercies of God I will sing for ever;"* and let none despair that seek pardon in sincerity.

Colloquy to our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.—Oh !

* Ps. lxxxviii. 2.

Fountain of infinite mercy, who hast merited by it that name that is above all names, the name of Jesus or Redeemer, how sweet, how dear should that name be to us, unhappy sinners, “for there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved.”* O Saviour and Redeemer of man, mercy caused Thee to descend from the glory of heaven for our salvation; mercy induced Thee to assume our miserable flesh, and to become the Son of Man, whereas Thou wert the Son of the living God. Mercy induced Thee to take upon thyself all our guilt and to wash it away in thy blood. Through love of mercy Thou bearest now in thy glory the marks of the wounds suffered for our redemption: Thou dost triumph in thy mercy, and Thou wilt rejoice and glory in it for eternity. “Have mercy on me, then, O Lord Jesus, according to thy great mercy, and according to thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.”† I am one of the greatest of sinners, and in thy mercy alone can I hope. “Soul of Christ,” &c.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—O Father of men! Father, too, of mercy! Thou hadst created man for eternal felicity, but his weakness and folly defeated thy benevolent design, and he became thy enemy; he exposed himself and his offspring to endless reprobation and perdition. When betrayed and lost he found a refuge in thy mercy and recovered thy favour. In mercy Thou didst give thy Divine Son to redeem him: “to redeem a slave Thou gavest thy only begotten Son.” Thou didst lay on Him the iniquities of us all. “For the crime of thy people

* Acts, iv. 12.

† Ps. l. 1.

Thou didst strike Him;”* in mercy to the children of men Thou wert cruel to thy own Son. Truly thy mercies have been above all thy works; “thy mercy is great above the heavens.”† The wounds of thy Divine Son, who reigns by thy side, will proclaim it for ever and ever. “In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded!”‡ “Our Father,” &c.

Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin.—“Hail, holy Queen,” &c., &c.

* Isai. liii. 8.

† Ps. cvii. 5.

‡ Ps. lxx. 1.

Fifth Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the Kingdom of Christ.

1 *Point.* To serve Jesus Christ is our duty.

2 *Point.* To serve Jesus Christ is our interest.

3 *Point.* To serve Jesus Christ is easy.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude.* Imagine Jesus Christ to call you, as He called his apostles: "Come, follow me."

2 *Prelude.* Pray with great fervour: "Draw me: we will run after Thee to the odour of thy ointments."*

1 *Point.* To follow Jesus Christ is our duty. We belong to Him by many titles: 1. By creation "He made us, and not we ourselves."† "All things were made by Him."‡ 2. By allegiance. He is King by a double claim. He is the King of all creation; "the King of kings and Lord of lords."§ In consequence of his victory on Calvary He said: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth."|| Thus He made us his by conquest. He has redeemed us from a dread captivity. He

* Cant. i. 3.

† Ps. xcix. 3.

‡ John, i. 3.

§ Apoc. xix. 16.

|| Matt. xxviii. 18.

bought us at a great price,* “with the Precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb unspotted and undefiled.”† 3. We are his servants, his followers by contract; our baptismal promises have bound us to this. Our vows of religion have been superadded, and, in consequence of our closer attachment, He has named us not servants, but friends and brethren, “I will not now call you servants, but I have called you friends.”‡ Thus laid under manifold obligations, what is our conduct, what our sentiments? Do we hesitate to pronounce the generous engagement: “I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go.”§ Or, if we have ever made it with sincerity, have we forgotten it, and lived as persons free to follow their own inclinations, however vain, however imperfect, as persons not obliged to service so exalted? Let us acknowledge our obligations, let us deplore our infidelity. We are bound; we cannot retreat: let us promise with renewed fervour: “As the Lord liveth, and as my Lord the King liveth, in what place soever Thou shalt be, Lord my King, either in death or in life, there will thy servant be.”||

2 *Point*. It is our interest. “Who for us men, and for our salvation, descended from heaven.”¶ If our Redeemer descended from the heights of heaven, and engaged in the warfare against our eternal enemies, He did it for our salvation. That salvation we cannot expect unless we follow Him in the contest. How dreadful the consequences of losing the victory! “To whom shall I more justly devote my life,” asks a religious writer, “than to

* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

§ Matt. viii. 19.

† 1 Pet. i. 19.

|| 2 Kings, xv. 21.

‡ John, xv. 15.

¶ Nicene Creed.

Him whose death has secured it for me? To whom with more advantage than to Him who promises eternal life? To whom by greater necessity than to Him who threatens eternal fire?" Without a resemblance to Jesus Christ, there is no obtaining eternal life; and religious are obliged to a more close resemblance. "Whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son."* If we adopt this imitation by following Him, then have we a claim to the most glorious promises made by Him, the highest rewards of heaven, the centuple in this life, to participate in the next in his glory and his crown. The path in which He has walked and in which we should follow leads alone to beatitude. Did we duly meditate these powerful motives for attachment to our Redeemer, our sloth and levity would be soon overcome, and we should find but little difficulty in advancing to the highest perfection of our state.

3 *Point.* It is easy. He has declared Himself, and his words do not pass away: "My yoke is sweet, and my burden light."† Those who enter with generosity and determination on his path find those words verified by their own experience; they are only the sluggish, they are only the tepid that feel the weight, or are tempted to lay it down. If the soul be but prepared to follow Him, difficulties vanish, and obstacles are removed from the way. "Prepare the way of the Lord . . . and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough ways plain."‡ Cast your eyes on the saints. Their privations and austerities make the soft and effeminate votaries of self-indulgence turn

* Rom. viii. 29.

† Matt. xi. 30.

‡ Isai. xl. 3, 4.

pale at the description, and did they find them painful or irksome? Hear St. Paul: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation."* Did we possess but a true love for Jesus Christ, our courage and perseverance would resemble theirs. "A good thing is love; it deprives of its weight every burden, and sweetens all that is bitter."† Let us fix our eyes on our Redeemer. Let us keep in mind what He has done and suffered for us, and we shall love and follow Him with ease and delight. "Come, brethren, let us proceed together; Jesus will be with us. He is gone before, loaded with his cross, that you also might learn to carry it, and love to die on the cross."‡ When He has gone before, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, who can hesitate to follow?

Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ.—Divine Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal King! King of glory, King of heaven! why hast Thou descended from thy throne at the right hand of the Father on the holy mountain, above the cherubim and seraphim and all the stupendous host of thy bright kingdom, to assume the lowly form of a slave, and to share in all the direful miseries of the human race? thy answer is: "My delight is to be with the children of men."§ Thy delight is to exercise thy mercy in saving the race of man from perdition. Thou sawest that the foul spirit who had rebelled in heaven, and seduced millions of the celestial host to unite in his apostasy, had also deceived the progenitors of thy favourite creature—man—and that unless redeemed and reclaimed, the entire race were doomed to share in the perdition of the angels.

* 2 Cor. vii. 4. † "Imitation of Christ." ‡ Ibid. § Prov. viii. 31.

Thou didst, therefore, determine to lay aside for a time the splendours of thy glory, to take upon thyself the form and the guilt of man, and by humiliation, suffering, and death to teach thy perishing creatures so to live, to endure, and to die, as to conquer their cruel and unsparing enemy. Thou art come, then, from heaven to be our leader in the warfare against our spiritual enemies: the combat, the wounds, and direful death which must be endured, must be principally thine, the victory and its rewards, the crown and eternal glory, shall be ours, although we can pretend for them no rightful claim. But are we to refuse or decline to follow Thee in this warfare which Thou hast undertaken for us? Are we to leave to Thee, our Divine Leader, all the labour, the entire danger, the wounds and suffering, and to expect nothing but rewards and glory for ourselves? Alas! Divine Jesus, if such be our expectations we know Thee not; we are equally ignorant of thy views, of thy wisdom and justice, and of our own obligations. We must not thus deceive ourselves: none shall be “crowned except he strive lawfully.”* No, Divine, Eternal King, if we are to share in thy victory and its rewards we must follow Thee faithfully in the combat. Who can refuse when he sees Thee take the lead? “Soul of Christ,” &c.

Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin Mary.—Heavenly Queen, Mother of God, and our Mother also, who didst participate largely in the sufferings of thy Divine Son, obtain for us by thy powerful intercession the spirit of his true and faithful followers, that we may not be cast off as unworthy of Him. “Hail, holy Queen,” &c.

* 2 Tim, ii. 5.

Colloquy to the Apostles.—Glorious Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, who were chosen by Him chiefs and rulers in his kingdom, gain for us who are called on to follow Him with you, that faithful spirit which animated your breasts, that we may assist in enkindling the fire that He came to cast on the earth; that we may not look back or prove ourselves spurious apostles and unfaithful servants; that we may fight the good fight and win the crown of justice laid up for us.

EXAMEN OF THE INTERIOR.

On the acquisition of Virtues.

What virtues have I as yet acquired? Have I acquired any in perfection? i. e., has it become easy and delightful to me to practise any? and which is it?—Am I really poor in spirit? To be poor in spirit is to have inclinations opposite to those who love riches. These always desire more—the poor in spirit always desire rather less than more—superfluities are hateful to them. The rich delight in what is costly; they seek their ease and indulgence in all things. The poor in spirit rejoice in what is lowly and humble, and to resemble Him “who had not where to lay his head.” Do I prize as I should do angelical purity? Do I guard with jealous care that celestial virtue, by custody of my senses, mortification? Do I nurture it by communication in prayer with God, the source and fountain of purity? Do I possess the virtue of obedience in reality? Is my obedience merely external?—do my will and judgment rebel? Will such obedience please God, who

sees the heart? Is my obedience prompt and cheerful? Do I possess the virtue of humility, the solid foundation for all? To what degree have I arrived: have I as yet formed an humble opinion of myself, of my virtue, my knowledge, and other qualities? Do I really condemn myself? Am I rejoiced to be undervalued, reprehended? can I even bear it with patience? Do I never seek for esteem or notice? Fraternal charity—what is my practice? Do I never experience antipathies or particular attachments? Is my charity like that of the Redeemer, universal, indulgent, ardent? Do I never wound the feelings of others? Am I willing to share their burdens?—to suffer inconvenience for them? What is my zeal for souls, in the spirit of my rule? Do I ever pray for sinners? How do I exercise zeal for their salvation? Do I know what virtue is most necessary for me? I shall learn when I know my predominant passion; it should be opposite to that. Your prayers, communions, examens, &c., should be constantly directed to the acquisition of it. Examine—resolve.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Personal application of the foregoing on the reign of Christ.

- 1 *Point.* The coming of Jesus Christ.
- 2 *Point.* His past invitations to you personally.
- 3 *Point.* His present invitations by grace.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

Preludes as in the last meditation.

- 1 *Point.* The coming of Christ. Reflect that the Eternal Son of God, who has an absolute dominion over

all things, and the most perfect right to obedience from all creatures, descended from heaven in person, to combat with the enemies of God and man, and to propagate his Father's glory and his own. He has done this in his own person, and by others whom He has engaged to follow Him. Contemplate the multitude of the apostles and other faithful servants whom He has gathered around Him. How perfect, how holy have they been! He desires to add you to the number. He presents Himself not merely as your Redeemer, but as your leader and teacher. Prepare your soul to hear and study his lessons, and resolve to walk in his footsteps. Adore Him, attach yourself to Him. With Peter and John, leave all to follow Him. Endeavour to realise all this, and apply it sensibly to your own soul. Yesterday, as it were, Jesus Christ called his first Apostles: to-day He calls you for the same task—to save souls: “Come,” He says, “follow me.”

2 Point. His past invitations to his services. Consider that from your birth, long before you were capable of knowing Him, Jesus Christ called you to the true faith, and when reason dawned, by instruction invited you to ratify your election. “I have loved thee,” He says, “with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking compassion on thee.”* In the meantime countless millions were left in idolatry, or heresy, or destitute of a proper knowledge of the truth. He has made you as a chosen arrow; He has called you even to the state of religion, notwithstanding your many offences against Him, and your enormous ingratitude for his former favours.

* Jer. xxxi. 3.

Those sacred words may be applied to you: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest."* Oh! how merciful, how indulgent, how generous, a prince and benefactor! And will you still continue ungrateful, thoughtless, and unfaithful?

3 *Point.* The present invitations of grace. How many who entered into life with you have, ere this day, been cut off in their sins and lost for ever. How many since you entered religion have been called away imperfectly prepared! You have been spared, and you are now invited anew to enter among the faithful followers of your Redeemer, in place of being numbered for eternity among the victims of Satan. How powerful is the call that is now made upon you! How many exalted graces are offered to you! Give, then, yourself to your Divine Master for his eternal servant. Say in sincerity: The night has passed, and the day of grace has at length dawned for me. "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me."† Renew your engagement: I will follow Thee, O Lord! whithersoever Thou goest. "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He has rendered to me?"‡

Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ.—How wonderful, O King of heaven! has been thy unmerited goodness and predilection towards me from eternity! Thou hast loved me with an everlasting love, and hast deigned, not merely to give me my being and redeem me, but to enrol me in the number of thy favourites and friends. Thou hast reposed confidence in me, and invited me to follow Thee more closely, and to contend for higher rewards than

* Luke, i. 76.

† Gal. ii. 20.

‡ Ps. cxv. 12.

others. And what return have I hitherto made, O Lord! for thy predilection and favours? How coldly, how imperfectly have I served Thee! What insensibility have I manifested for thy many special favours! When I compare my conduct, not merely with the heroic labours of thy first Apostles, but with that of faithful religious of the Order to which I belong, whom I myself have known, or of whom I have read or heard, what reason have I not to blush, and bow my head with shame? What reason have I not also to fear the fate of the barren tree? But Thou, O Lord! remember thy mercy; cast me not off for ever! "Out of the depths of my misery I cry to Thee, O Lord! Lord hear my voice. Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication."* "Have mercy on me according to thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my iniquity renew a right spirit within my bowels . . . and confirm me with a perfect spirit."† Grant me the true spirit of my holy state, and enable me to correspond with thy wondrous graces. "Soul of Christ," &c.

Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin.—Mary, Mother of mercy, and Queen of Heaven; Queen of Apostles and Confessors, I implore thy intercession; plead for me with thy Divine Son, and obtain for me the grace of fervour and fidelity.

Colloquy to your patrons.—Oh, holy patrons, intercede for me: obtain for me pardon for the past; gain for me the true spirit of my holy state, and grace to correspond with it. "Hail, holy Queen," &c.

* Ps. cxxix. 1, 2.

† Ps. l. 1, 12, 14.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION.

On the peace of the Soul.

1 *Point.* The nature and value of spiritual peace.

2 *Point.* The obstacles which oppose this peace.

3 *Point.* The means for obtaining it.

Preparatory prayer: “My God, &c.”

1 *Point.* The nature and value of the peace of God. It is not as the peace of this world: it does not consist in the gratification of every desire. “Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you,” said our Divine Lord to his apostles when about to leave them: “not as the world giveth do I give unto you.”* His usual salutation was, “Peace be to you.”† The same form He prescribed to his Apostles: “Into whatever house you enter, first say, peace be to this house.”‡ St. Paul inculcates much the importance and value of this peace: “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice, and *peace*, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”§ “The peace of God which surpasseth all understanding.”|| Peace is one of the chief fruits of the Divine Spirit. “Charity, joy, *peace*.”¶ This heavenly peace is one of the first and most precious and desirable of those virtues which spiritualists term solid virtues, because they cannot exist in the soul without being accompanied, confirmed, and consolidated, as it were, with many others. This will evidently appear when we come to consider the means by which the peace of God is

* John, xiv. 27.

† Ib. xx. 19.

‡ Luke x. 5.

§ Rom. xiv. 17.

|| Phil. iv. 7.

¶ Gal. v. 22.

to be secured. How important must it be, therefore, for the religious soul to acquire this peace, to know the obstacles that prevent its existence, and the means by which it can be acquired! This sweet peace forms one of the most precious and desirable attendants of religious virtue: it renders the most humble retreat of the lowly servants of God more delightful than the palaces of kings.

2 *Point.* The obstacles to the enjoyment of the peace of God. 1. The first which presents itself for consideration is the want of the religious spirit. The member of religious life who has been so unfortunate as to contract habits of tepidity, and thus lost the love of his holy state, cannot enjoy the peace of God. "The negligent and tepid religious," says the experienced author of the "Imitation of Christ," "suffers pain and annoyance on every side; he enjoys no interior consolation, and he is not permitted to seek that which is external:"* he does not possess peace of any kind. Religious, therefore, who desire true peace, the peace of God and of Jesus Christ, must cherish with care the spirit of their holy state; without that spirit they cannot be happy. 2. A second obstacle to peace of soul in religion is an offspring of that which has been noticed, and it is found in a want of purity of conscience. The immediate effect of tepidity, and the decay of religious spirit, is to cause neglect of prayer, infidelity in the observance of discipline and rule, and the indulgence of natural inclinations. The religious who has fallen into this unhappy state contracts habits of venial sin, and loses, in a great degree, that delicacy of conscience which is so indispen-

* "Imit. of Christ."

sable both for peace and security. He can have no familiar intercourse with God, whom he offends so continually, and to whose divine will and pleasure he is so indifferent; which he comes almost to despise—at least to forget. In order to enjoy some slender peace of mind such a soul must either harden itself against remorse, or seek refuge in self-deception, and form a false conscience. It does not merit the name of a true religious—it lulls the reproaches of its own mind in a false peace, and lives in a species of imposture; it bears the habit, but is destitute of the true spirit of a person devoted to God. He, however, reads the heart, and cannot be deceived. 3. A third obstacle to religious peace lies in the neglect of self-denial. The affections and desires of the heart are not under control, and as they cannot be indulged, and are subject to constant disappointment, the life of those who suffer from this defect is continually embittered. If ever such inclinations are indulged they cause the torture of remorse. 4. It is in the last place useful to notice an impediment to the peace of the soul, to which many religious persons expose themselves by irregular attachment to relatives whom they have left in the world. In consequence of this attachment, and their communication with such relatives, they render themselves subject to all the afflictions which arise from the solitudes of worldly life. They are separated from the world only in appearance, and they cannot hope for that peace which is promised to those only who are truly devoted to God. It remains to be remarked that the peace of God does not exempt the soul from spiritual trials or afflictions, permitted by God for the trial and merit of those He most loves—they are often to be numbered among his most precious favours.

3 *Point.* The means for securing the peace of God. The most effectual and truly essential means are to be found in self-denial, without which such peace is not to be expected or hoped for. The passions and irregular inclinations of men are as the diseases of their souls, and, as long as they remain unrestrained, they inevitably cause pain and torment; self-denial is the indispensable remedy for those diseases, and by that alone can we hope to remove them. The mortified soul alone can possess the true and lasting peace of God. This truth is exemplified in the means to be noticed in the second place, and which is specified by our Divine Lord Himself. "Learn of me," He says, "because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls: for my yoke is sweet and my burden light."* Humility and meekness are never-failing guardians of the true peace of the soul. Another fountain of peace is indicated in those inspired words of Isaias: "Oh, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, thy peace had been as a river, and thy justice as the waves of the sea."† Obedience is a never-failing source of peace to the fervent religious soul. It is a matter of no consequence to it, whatever may be the requirements of superiors; they notify to it the divine will, and without anxiety for the result it resolves to obey; its virtue then conveys to it, as a river, a flood of rich rewards. Some of the virtues indicated by our Divine Lord in the eight beatitudes are fruitful causes of the richest and most delightful spiritual peace. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." The

* Matt. xi. 29, 30.

† Isai. xlviii. 18.

penitential spirit, which cancels and atones for sin, lays in the soul the most solid foundation for peace. The wilful sinner cannot have peace, the penitent whose sins are forgiven cannot be without it. “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.” Purity of conscience, which prepares the soul for close communication with God, leads it to the very fountain of never-failing peace. “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.”* This beatitude indicates that spirit of fervour which renders the soul faithful to duty and to God, and merits from Him a superabundance of peace.

Religious soul, value this peace of God above all earthly treasures, and leave nothing undone to secure it.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

1 *Point.* The Divine Infant at Bethlehem—the Son of God.

2 *Point.* The Divine Infant—the Son of Man.

3 *Point.* The Divine Infant—the Redeemer of mankind.

Preparatory prayer: “My God,” &c.

1 *Prelude.* Call to mind the history, “And it came to pass, that in those days there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. . . . And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child. . . . And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes,

* Matt. v. 5, 6, 8.

and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”*

2 *Prelude.* Represent to your mind the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, wearied with their long journey, yet passing along the streets at Bethlehem, and repelled from every door, until they reach a species of cavern, used as a stable or shed for cattle, into which they enter; imagine the low and poor accommodation which they find. In that stable the Divine Infant is born; throw yourself prostrate in spirit, and adore Him with all the powers of your soul.

3 *Prelude.* Pray for grace to love your Lord and Redeemer with a faithful love.

1 *Point.* Imagine the Divine Infant laid in the manger, as described. Say, There is the Son of the living God, the Eternal God and Ruler of all things, the Creator of heaven and earth: “All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made.”† That infant voice called all things created into existence. He has descended from heaven and left the kingdom of his glory for our salvation. “He has emptied Himself,” according to the expression of St. Paul, “and taken the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”‡ Having decreed to unite his Divinity to a created nature, He chose to assume the lowest in the intellectual order—the nature of man—in which the spiritual soul is united to animal matter. On earth He avoided the elevated, the

* Luke ii. 1, 4, 7.

† John, i. 3.

‡ Phil. ii. 7, 8.

great, the royal. He chose to be born in a stable with beasts, as an outcast from men. He would appear as the meanest of the mean. Omnipotent as He is, and though the creation of worlds would cost Him but a thought, He assumes all the seeming weakness of a tender infant, yet to those infant hands belong the sceptre of heaven and earth. Contemplate Him wrapt in his poor clothes and laid on the straw, warmed by the breath of the ox and the ass, or in the arms of his sacred Mother, and adored by St. Joseph. Consider all attentively, and wait a short time to hear the voice of the Divine Spirit, if He should deign to speak to your soul. Should He do so, calmly attend and nourish your spirit with the affections which He suggests. If no affection be excited in your mind, endeavour yourself to elicit acts of love of your infant Redeemer, and admiration and desire of his virtues. Consider the excess of his love in descending from the splendours of his Father's throne, where He reigns, to take human flesh, with all its miseries, for love of you. Adore Him, notwithstanding his humble disguise. Repeat many times: "I adore Thee with the celestial spirits, Eternal Son of the living God; how dearly hast Thou loved us, O Lord Jesus! My Lord and my God! I love Thee, and I will love Thee for ever; to Thee all homage, and glory, and all obedience are due from every intellectual being, my Lord and my God!"

2 Point. The Divine Infant at Bethlehem—the Son of Man. The promise made to Eve, when she had prevaricated, is now to be realised: the seed of the woman is to "crush the serpent's head."* Eve ruined the human race and proved

* Gen. iii. 15.

herself unworthy to be its parent : the Son of Mary is now come from heaven to redeem it—to restore to it its birth-right and crush its infernal enemy ; and Mary is to be henceforth the Mother of the redeemed race and Queen of men and angels. Her Divine Son, however, is to endure all the miseries of the race which He is come to redeem, except sin. In becoming man He united Himself to the lowest grade of intellectual being : as man, He chose to be numbered among the lowest class of the human race. He would be born in a ruined stable, as the reproach of men and outcast of the people. He causes his sacred Mother to be forced to a distance from her humble cottage at Nazareth, where the necessities of life, at least, could be found, though little more, and He chooses for his birth-place the lowliest possible, and in a strange locality, where there is an extreme want of all suitable conveniences. His own words might be applied to Him at the first moment of his earthly life as man : “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.”* Prostrate yourself before Him and offer Him a dwelling in your heart. Say : Divine Lord, how badly are you lodged on your first appearance on earth ! I offer you a dwelling in my heart, but it is unworthy of Thee : I am unworthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but Thou canst heal me ; say but the word and my soul shall be healed. Approach then in spirit ; perhaps the benign Virgin may invite you to kiss the feet of her Divine Son. Embrace them with all the ardour of your heart, and give vent to your pious affections in oft-repeated aspirations of love. Embrace the poverty

* Luke, ix. 58.

of Jesus and his sacred Mother ; renounce all the treasures of this world that you may secure those of heaven.

3 *Point.* The Divine Infant—the Redeemer of mankind. The humility and poverty of the infant Redeemer were not for mere show or appearance : they were the introduction to that life of lowliness, labour, and suffering which He came to endure as our Model. This was an essential feature of his office of Redeemer. He came as our “ High Priest . . . to be tempted in all things like as we are without sin.”* He was to bear all the penalties of sin on earth without its guilt. He was to endure unceasingly during life sorrow, apparent weakness, affliction, hunger, fatigue, contempt, the excess of pain, disappointment. He was never to spend a moment during his human life without affliction, and He was to have the cross incessantly before his eyes. He was to be in every respect a victim : as a lamb prepared for sacrifice. He was to suffer without consolation as without relief. He felt deeply his dereliction and abandonment, according to the words of the prophet : “ I have laboured with crying ; my jaws have become hoarse ; my eyes have failed while I hope in my God. . . . They are multiplied above the hairs of my head who hate me without cause. . . . In thy sight are all that afflict me ; my heart hath expected reproach and misery ; and I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none : and for one that would comfort me, and I found none.”† Such is the life that the Redeemer at his birth was to expect. The greater number of those whom He came to redeem were to despise, reject, hate, and persecute Him. He ardently desires to find some who may appre-

* Heb. iv. 15.

† Ps. lxxviii. 4, 5, 21.

ciate his love and mercy, and who may make Him a return of affection. Will not you, O religious soul, be of the number? Will you be of the number of those who persecute Him, or, at least, who are indifferent to his sufferings? What has hitherto been your conduct? What effect have your sins had with regard to Him as your Redeemer? What return have you made to the Son of God who has descended from his throne of glory to redeem you? What return have you made to that Man who has endured such sufferings and died in torments for that purpose? At length ponder well and deeply these questions that must determine your fate in eternity. Begin at length to love really and truly your Divine Redeemer.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—Oh! Eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in what words can I express the wonders of thy love and mercy, and the gratitude that should expand our hearts when we behold the Redeemer whom Thou hast given to us under the lowly human form that He has assumed at his birth. How fully have you proved that paternal love so fervently expressed in thy words, recorded by thy prophet: “Can a woman forget her infant so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget Thee?”* And the similar words penned by the evangelist: “God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son.”† As the Church has expressed in her office: “To redeem a slave Thou hast sacrificed thy Son.” Oh! unheard-of mercy! impossible to all but thee, O God of infinite perfection. And is that slave for ever to continue ungrateful? Am I, O Lord! O Celestial Father! am I for ever to

* Isai. xlix. 15.

† John, iii. 16.

continue insensible to such infinite love, and fail in fidelity in thy service? Am I to remain guilty of that ingratitude and infidelity which ruined thy ancient people and forced thee to cast them off? Am I to despise for ever thy parental admonition? “Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; and why will you die, O house of Israel?”* No, O Celestial Parent! my obdurate heart at length must yield to such intense, such infinite love. From this moment I consecrate it to thee, through thy Divine Son, entirely and for ever. “Our Father,” &c.

Colloquy to the Divine Infant.—O Infant Redeemer! Son of the Omnipotent Creator, what has caused Thee to lay aside thy celestial splendour, and why hast Thou assumed the form of thy lowly, fallen, and rebellious slave? Thou hast been impelled to do so by thy infinite love: “My delights are to be with the children of men.”† Thou sawest them in danger of perishing: of becoming the prey of the infernal serpent, and of being for ever buried in the gulf of fire. There was no other sacrifice that could redeem them, and Thou saidst in the council of the Adorable Trinity: “Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not . . . then said I, behold I come.”‡ Thou hast assumed the form of a guilty slave: Thou art clothed in the degraded flesh of sinful man to regain for him that bright kingdom which he had lost, and Thou art to conquer his enemies by submitting to those sufferings and that death which he had merited. Thou art come to teach him how to suffer and to die. O loving brother! O true friend! And is man to leave all the suffering to thee? Am I to live in ease and sloth and self-indulgence, and yet to share in thy

* Ezech. xxxiii. 11.

† Prov. viii. 31.

‡ Heb. x. 5, 7.

victory, won by humiliations, torments, and death? No, Divine Infant; I must cast away such delusions, and become a true follower of thee. Grant me this grace, O Infant Redeemer! that I may not lose the fruits of thy victory. "Soul of Christ," &c.

Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin.—O Immaculate Mother of God! Mother, too, of all whom He has redeemed, gain for me grace to follow Him with fidelity, that I may not lose that kingdom which He has come to regain. "Hail, holy Queen," &c.

Colloquy to St. Joseph.—Oh, glorious saint, who wast chosen as the guardian and protector of the infant God and Redeemer of man, teach me to love Him truly, and obtain for me that spirit of fidelity that may secure for me the fruits of redemption; be to me also a protector, and secure me for eternity.

Sixth Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

SEVERAL points of resemblance can be observed between the circumstances of the birth of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem, and his constant daily reappearance and manner of life in the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist:—1. He is the same Eternal Son of God who descends from heaven for the salvation of men. 2. There occurs in both cases similar concealment of the glory of the divine nature; like humiliation, poverty, privation, and abandonment of Himself. 3. We observe the same immolation of Himself for love of that cherished race to whom the divine words refer: “My delight is to be with the children of men.” 4. We also have to contemplate the same effects, the diffusion of holiness, virtue, and the spread and maintenance of that heavenly fire of love which He came to cast on the earth. Great utility may be found in meditating this comparison, especially for members of religious communities, who dwell almost universally under the same roof with the Lord Jesus in the adorable Eucharist, and who may be considered domestics of his household: Their prayers are also usually offered before the tabernacle, in which He dwells for love of them.

Jesus at Bethlehem and in the Blessed Eucharist.

1 *Point.* Your relations with Him, and those of his Blessed Mother.

2 *Point.* Her purity, and your unworthiness.

3 *Point.* Imitate her affection for Him.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude.* Compare the crib and the tabernacle.

2 *Prelude.* An act of faith in the real presence of our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist.

3 *Prelude.* Pray for ardent love of Him.

1 *Point.* Your relations towards your Redeemer and those of his Blessed Mother. He is the same Eternal Son of God that lay in her arms, who lives in the tabernacle with you, and whom you receive. You are not his parent, but you are a member of his mystical body; you are, in a mystical sense, his flesh and blood. "We are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread."* That divine food changes mystically your substance into his; and that blood which inebriates you is the same which flowed in his veins, and which He drew from the pure fount of the heart of his Sacred Mother. Consider how closely you are related to so celestial, so divine a family, and ponder what you should be; so free from every stain, so pure, so emancipated from all unworthy affections and attachment to this world, so devoted to God, so inflamed with ardent love of your Redeemer, who has loved you, died for you, and sought such an intimate union with you, as to become your food; this He has done, notwithstanding your unworthi-

* 1 Cor. x. 17.

ness, in order to promote your sanctification and felicity. If He has done such wonders for your soul, consider what ceaseless exertions you should make to advance in holiness; how ardent should be your gratitude and your desire to make a return for such love. St. Peter presented to the body of the faithful an elevated picture of the holiness of their state as Christians: "You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: that you may declare his virtues who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."* What words can be found to describe the holiness that belongs to religious souls so often nurtured with the divine bread, and dwelling usually under the same roof with the Lord Jesus! they form, as it were, the domestics of his household. Endeavour to elevate your thoughts, religious soul, to comprehend the divine views in your regard, and to excite ardent desires to render yourself less unworthy of the wondrous favours conferred on you.

2. *Point.* The immaculate purity and holiness of the Blessed Virgin contrasted with your unworthiness. She was miraculously preserved from every shadow of a stain, even from original sin, or else she would not have been chosen as the earthly parent of the Son of God; yet she felt and acknowledged herself to be unworthy of such honour. Imagine you hear her at Bethlehem speak to her Divine Son in words expressive of her profound humility, and, at the same time, of her ardent love. O! Divine Lord, at once my Creator and my Child, Thou art infinite holiness and infinite perfection. The heavens are not pure in thy

* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

sight, and are unworthy to contain Thee, and yet Thou hast deigned to descend from thy eternal throne in the splendours of the Godhead, and to dwell on earth with thy lowly and unworthy handmaid. St. Teresa was never so penetrated with confusion and remorse for her tepidity and sins, as when she reflected that they were perpetrated, and that she was stained with them in the presence, and in the very essence of God, in whom we “live, move, and have our being,”* this was a thought she could scarce endure. A similar thought should penetrate the heart of religious persons, and it should be rendered more overwhelming, when they remember their connection with our Divine Lord in the Blessed Eucharist. Lament, my soul, your tepidity and coldness, your many sins and defects. Alas, Divine Lord ! how unworthy am I of thy love ! How I deplore my miseries ! I am indeed covered with a leprosy of sin, but, if Thou wilt, Thou canst cleanse me ! Say then the word, and my soul shall be healed. Indulge here in deepest compunction ; deplore in particular, your predominant faults. Imitate Magdalen, wash the feet of our Lord with your tears. Break in pieces that passion which you cherish—pride, vanity, self-will, self-love—and anoint his feet with the sacrifice. The sweet odour will fill the house where you dwell.

3 *Point.* Contemplate the affection of the blessed Mother, imagine that you again hear her words, “ O my God, and my Creator how couldst Thou so love thy poor and lowly handmaid ? How couldst Thou leave heaven to dwell with me ? Thou art the God of my heart, and my portion for ever. Thou

* Acts. xvii. 28.

art my treasure, my delight, my only love, my only joy, my God! my Creator! my Child! my Jesus!" Do you adopt similar expressions of love; my God! my Creator! my Father! my Brother! my Friend! my Spouse! my Jesus! my only Love! Priests are called on to apply all that relates to the adorable mystery of the Eucharist to themselves, in a peculiar manner. How passing all wonder are the privileges conferred on them! The immaculate Virgin gave birth *once* to the Son of the Eternal God, and He was subject to her on earth: Priests summon Him from heaven as often as they celebrate the divine mysteries, and our Lord is subject to their will in the most perfect manner. He abandons Himself to their care with unbounded confidence, and relies on their piety and love as on his sacred Mother; what corresponding love is therefore to be expected from them! what care! what reverence! what sanctity! Oh, priest of the Most High God! priest of the New Covenant, compare your life with your obligations: how perfect should you be, how inflamed with love! how devoted to so Divine a Lord and Master! How highly, and how dearly should you prize the privilege, when He allows you to call Him your friend and brother; imitate his immaculate mother in her reverence and affection.

Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ.—O Redeemer of mankind! it might well appear that, in assuming the nature of man for our salvation, Thou hadst exhausted even the very lowest depths of thy infinite mercy and love, and that it was not possible to extend further the sacrifices that Thou couldst make for thy fallen creatures; but thy wisdom has invented and thy omnipotence realised infinitely more. In thy incarnation were laid aside the splendours of the Godhead;

in the adorable Eucharist Thou hast concealed even thy human form, and appeared as an inanimate being. Thou hast veiled over and hidden thy infinite glory under the sacramental species, in order to become the food of man, and to be united to his animal nature, and thus to elevate both to a participation in the glory of the Divinity, as is now realized in thy humanity, enthroned in heaven at the right hand of thy Eternal Father. Oh! wondrous combination of infinite condescension, benignity, mercy, love, wisdom, and power! And this adorable sacrament Thou hast given as a pledge to our fallen nature, of a glorious resurrection and immortal life. O Divine Lord! what return can we make to Thee for the wonders wrought in our favour! To live and die for Thee we should estimate as nothing. How true are thy sacred words, that when we have done all that is commanded, we should still acknowledge that we are “useless servants!”* Grant us grace that we may endeavour at least to make Thee some return; allow us not to be totally insensible and ungrateful. Let us not refuse or neglect the little that we can perform. “Soul of Christ,” &c.

Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin.—O! Virgin Mother of God, to whose care the Divine Jesus was committed at his birth, gain for us grace, and teach us how to love Him. Teach us to imitate your humility, your spotless purity, your gratitude, fidelity, and tender affection. At least teach us so to live as to secure that celestial crown of which the adorable Eucharist is the promise and the pledge. “Hail, holy Queen,” &c.

* Luke, xvii. 10.

EXAMEN OF THE INTERIOR.

On living by Faith.

There is a happy state of mind arising from a strong and lively faith, and that simplicity of principle which springs from it, which state conduces much to our security and contentment in religious life, and smoothes down many difficulties. That state once was mine, or should have been so. I then looked on every superior as holding the place of God; their words I heard and obeyed, as the words of God, and my study was to conform to them, far from being tempted to discuss or condemn them. My holy rules in all their parts—the avocations of the Order were to me objects of admiration. To regulate my conduct by the former I deemed the highest perfection; to be employed in any of the latter, however humble, was to me a subject of holy ambition. Whatever was disagreeable, I took as my penance; whatever was difficult, I looked upon as my proper lot; to serve in the house of God, was to me to reign. Are my sentiments now the same? Do I never regulate my conduct, of late, towards superiors by human motives, and forget God whose place they hold? Have I lost the simplicity of faith, and have the new principles which I have learned contributed to my happiness, to my good? Are these principles from God? Do I esteem the occupations in which I am engaged by obedience? Do I feel convinced that they are precisely those in which God would have me be engaged? Do I exert myself in them with zeal in order to glorify God? Do I never desire to have the disposal of myself? Do I feel convinced that

nothing could expose me to greater danger than to have my destination or my employment regulated by my own will? Examine—resolve.

“Lord! increase our faith.”*

SECOND MEDITATION.

Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist the Model of the religious soul.

1 *Point.* Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist a Model of obedience as a self-devoted victim.

2 *Point.* Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist a Model of a life hidden in God.

3 *Point.* Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist a Model of a life of sacrifice and abandonment of self.

Preparatory prayer: “My God,” &c.

1 *Prelude.* An act of Faith in the real presence.

2 *Prelude.* Pray that this Divine food may change your substance into itself, and cause you to live the life of Christ.

1 *Point.* Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist a Model of perfect obedience. At the word of the Priest, whoever he may be, and whatever his qualities, whether he be learned or ignorant, wise or foolish, holy or otherwise, the Lord of glory and Creator of the universe, descends from his throne in heaven and becomes present under the sacred species on the altar. There He remains until removed at the will of his creatures. Wherever He is placed, as a portion of inanimate matter, He lies for days, for months, and would do so for years. He allows Himself to be conveyed in every direction; to be exposed to insult, sacrilege, and injury, from the sinner, and heretic, and infidel.

* Luke, xvii. 5.

He is carried to the poor, the sick, the leper; to the hovel, the hospital, the prison. He allows Himself to be given even to the loathsome sinner. In obedience He submits to indignities and sufferings infinitely more hateful than death to Him.

2 *Point*. He is a Model of a hidden life in God. “You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”* How perfectly is the principle of spiritual life here expressed exemplified in the Blessed Eucharist! In it the majesty, the glory, the beauty of the Godhead, the divine and human natures themselves, are hidden; and our Lord appears as a stone, or as ordinary food. Yet He is employed in promoting the glory of his Father and the salvation of men. He works secretly, so that it is impossible for human eye to discover the effect. So should you be dead to the world and to self; so should you endeavour to labour; all human and natural views should ever be removed, and, as it were, annihilated; the servant of God alone should appear.

3 *Point*. Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist is a Model of a crucified life: “I, through the law, am dead to the law that I may live to God: with Christ I am nailed to the cross.”† Everyone called with the Redeemer to save souls should aspire to the spirit of a victim. As the Divine Head each member should be prepared to sacrifice all for the great end in view: ease, sloth, pleasure, health, life. Each day this sacrifice should be renewed before the altar. When difficulties arise, when sufferings and humiliations are endured, the follower of Jesus should rejoice and exult,

* Col. iii. 3.

† Gal. ii. 19.

for it is then that he becomes a true follower of a crucified Master. How is He sacrificed in every point of view in the Blessed Eucharist! Form your resolutions to study daily in this divine book before the altar.

Colloquy to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.—Divine Lord Jesus, what tongue shall describe or what imagination shall in any degree realise the wonders of thy Eucharistic life! Thou, the Eternal God, the source of all being and Creator of all that exists in heaven or on earth: who dost reign in the highest, in infinite majesty and glory, and whom the universe cannot contain, livest a hidden life in this adorable Sacrament, under the form of a particle of matter which may be often so diminutive as to be scarcely visible to the eye. Thou dost thus conceal thy glory in order to become the food of thy favoured but unworthy creature, man; to offer thyself daily for him a victim of infinite dignity and value, to invigorate him with the true substantial bread of life, to sanctify and inflame him with thy love, to enable him to imitate thy virtues and to give him a pledge of beatitude and a glorious immortality. For this Thou hast condemned Thyself to be a prisoner on this defiled and lowly earth for ages, and to dwell confined, and often neglected and forgotten, in our miserable tabernacles. Thou hast exposed thyself to the blasphemies and outrages of the millions of thy innumerable enemies, and the cold indifference of those who profess to be your servants and adorers, yet often neglect Thee. O Divine Lord! how deeply do I deplore my past insensibility and ingratitude! How ardently do I now desire to make such a return as my weakness may permit! The only return possible, the only return which Thou will accept is to love

Thee sincerely, and to prove that love by imitating thy virtues, and by fidelity in thy service. That return, Divine Lord, I desire to make: assist me by thy grace, for without Thee I can do nothing. “Soul of Christ,” &c.

Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God.—Immaculate Mother of the Redeemer, how great must have been thy delight to bear Him in thy arms, and to adore Him as He slept or lay before thee in his infantine beauty! Obtain for us some portion of thy lively faith and ardent love, that we too may honour and adore Him in sincerity in his sacramental disguise. In vain should we hope to emulate your immaculate purity or virtue, O spotless Virgin and Mother; yet gain for us grace that we may be freed from all sin, and that we may not be displeasing in his divine sight. “Salve Regina,” &c.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION.

On our ordinary Actions.

1 *Consideration*, Their importance.

2 *Consideration*. The manner in which they should be performed.

Preparatory Prayer: “My God,” &c.

1 *Point*. The importance of our ordinary actions. Every action, it might be said every word and thought of the religious, is of inconceivable value. Those treasures which worldlings seek with such ceaseless care and unremitting activity are less, compared with them, when duly performed, than the smallest grain of sand if balanced against

an empire : and this, because by every action we may merit eternal glory. Some of our daily actions belong to that class which spiritualists term good actions ; others, to that styled indifferent. The first comprise our spiritual duties, works of charity and zeal, all acts of virtue. What must be our estimation of the value of these when we remember that every supernatural act of virtue acquires for us a degree of merit before God, and to that degree of merit is attached a degree of glory in heaven. Calculate the acts of this nature which the soul elicits during a meditation well performed ; a Mass heard, or celebrated with due dispositions, in the examens, and other spiritual duties of a single day, and in the performance of other good works. All this may be gained by performing these actions well ; all may be lost, and give place to sin and its penalties, by performing them ill. “ It is no small matter to lose or to gain the kingdom of God.” Indifferent actions, such as studies, labour, recreation, are termed so, because they may be rendered either virtuous or evil, as our intention may sanctify or vitiate them. With a proper intention we may render each an act of obedience, humility, penance, charity, or zeal, love of God, religion, and so forth. Calculate, again, the celestial treasures which here may be accumulated and laid up in heaven, where “ no thief approacheth nor moth corrupteth.”* Study the lesson of your Redeemer : “ Traffic till I come.”† Turn every moment, every talent to the best account.

2 *Point.* The manner of performing our ordinary actions. 1. In order to perform our actions in such a

* Luke. xii 33.

† Ib. xix. 13.

manner as to secure their full merit, we must, in the first place, attend to the intention. Without this our best actions are deprived of much of their merit, and those which are indifferent have none. The merit of our actions can be even multiplied in the following manner, by performing each with the formal motives of various virtues. The same action may be at once a prayer, an act of divine love, an act of love of your neighbour, an act of obedience, and an act of self-denial, if offered with these different intentions. But we should not be satisfied with forming the intention only at morning: we should recall it to mind and renew it in thought at the commencement of the principal occupations of the day, lest our frailty should have vitiated it, and because actual intention is to be preferred to that which is merely habitual. This practice will tend also to preserve recollection of mind, and form a habit of attending to the presence of God. 2. Our actions should be performed with exactness as to time, place, and all the circumstances which should concur to their perfection. It is an axiom in philosophy that “evil arises from any defect:” our acts are vitiated in proportion as they are deficient in this quality of exactness. Pass in review the actions of the day, and examine how they are performed—study, labour, recreation, teaching, &c. Do we make it our study to succeed? Do we endeavour to edify and lead those whom we instruct to God? Do we inform ourselves of the best methods for these purposes? Do we endeavour to learn from spiritual works the best manner of performing our sacred duties? Examine into all defects, and determine on the means of correcting them. 3. Fervour. Every work of God should

be performed with attention and fervour. All the actions of a religious may be denominated works of God, consecrated as He is, and offered as a holocaust by his sacred engagements. But fear should not be necessary to secure my fervour. I should endeavour to proceed with the spirit of love, not with the perturbation of fear. When I reflect on the infinite majesty of Him whom I serve, and on all that I owe Him, I should cast away the mercenary spirit which looks to self, and serve God from love. It is not the material action which He values, but the spirit in which it is performed. Man beholds the exterior, but God regards the heart, as we are admonished in the book of the "Imitation of Christ." 4. A fourth quality which our actions should possess in order to acquire their full perfection is perseverance. "He that shall persevere unto the end he shall be saved."* This point shall be the subject of a separate consideration.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Imitation of Jesus Christ.

1 *Point.* We should endeavour to copy the mind of Jesus Christ.

2 *Point.* We should endeavour to copy the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

3 *Point.* We should endeavour to copy his exterior.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

* Matt. x. 22.

1 *Prelude.* Represent to your mind Jesus Christ among men “doing good to all.”

2 *Prelude.* Beg grace to imitate Him: “to put on Jesus Christ.”

1 *Point.* The mind of Jesus Christ. How holy, how perfectly purified from vanity, were the thoughts which flowed through the mind of the Redeemer? How just, how prudent, how unobscured by passion were his judgments! Two objects were ever the matter of his meditations—the glory of his Eternal Father, and the salvation of men. As far as human frailty permits, they should also form the subject of mine. It is not a degree of perfection above my state. I am bound to seek the glory of God; I am bound to promote the salvation of others: this spirit of zeal I am obliged to study, even in its perfection. How unceasingly was the mind of the Redeemer occupied with God and his divine perfections! What created object met his eye, and did not bring to his thoughts the recollection of the Creator! This was a lesson taught by God to the saints, even of the Old Law, “Walk before me, and be perfect.”* And St. Paul instructs us that our thoughts should be in heaven—“our conversation is in heaven.”† Could I arrive at this purity, this singleness of mind, from how many defiling vanities, from how many embittered recollections, from how many dangerous temptations, should I be freed. The Redeemer’s mind found such thoughts congenial. Meditation, love of prayer, internal mortification, may render them habitual to me. “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”‡

* Gen. xvii. 1.

† Phil. iii. 20

‡ Col. ii. 3.

In this also I must imitate Jesus Christ. Without knowledge I cannot comply with the obligations I have contracted of instructing others. What species of knowledge should I principally seek? That which perhaps I most neglect, that which my profession requires—a knowledge of religion and of spiritual things. If other sciences may be rendered useful, this is essential and indispensable.

2 Point. The Heart of Jesus. The best devotion to the Heart of Jesus is that which studies there, and endeavours to imbibe Its virtues. He invites us to study in that divine book: “Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.”* As virtues are far more practical than speculative, they principally reside in the heart and will, the mainsprings of human action. How meek, how submissive, how obedient was the Heart of Jesus! Behold Him in his agony: “O my Father! if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”† Am I thus submissive to the dispensations of Providence? How meek was He before men, before his persecutors: “as a lamb before his shearer.”‡ How full of charity and zeal was that Divine Heart! “who loved me and delivered Himself up for me.”§ Consider his compassion for sinners: “He prayed for the transgressors.”|| “Neither will I condemn thee,” said He to the sinner; “go, now, and sin no more.”¶ “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”** Is my

* Matt. xi. 29.

§ Gal. ii. 20.

† Ib. xxvi. 39.

|| Isai. liii. 12.

** Luke, xxiii. 34.

‡ Isai. liii. 7.

¶ John, viii. 11.

heart thus modelled? Is it not proud, is it not hard, is it not selfish? Oh! if you had once entered into the interior of Jesus.*

3 *Point*. His exterior. “We are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.”† “You are the light of the world.”‡ If the minister of God, if the religious, imagines that he may be indifferent to his exterior comportment, he has formed but an imperfect idea of his obligations. However great his virtues, however solid his instructions may be, he runs the hazard of spoiling much of their effect. Our Redeemer must here again become our Model. We must imitate Him both in his words and in his actions, and endeavour to realize, as far as our frailty will permit, the commendation pronounced on Him: “He hath done all things well.”§ If we have studied well to copy the interior of the Redeemer, and to imbibe his spirit, to arrive at some exterior resemblance will not be difficult, for: “Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,”|| and are easily distinguished as such by their conduct. If we have imbibed that spirit, our words, like those of the Redeemer, will always have a tendency to good: they will display the meekness, charity, piety, and zeal which predominate in the mind. If we must speak occasionally on secular matters, we shall never betray a secular spirit.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—Great Creator, and most benign and loving Parent of mankind, Thou hast formed thy lowly creature to thy own divine image, and destined

* “Imit. of Christ.” † 1 Cor. iv. 9. ‡ Matt. v. 14.

§ Mark, vii. 37.

|| Rom. viii. 14.

him with infinite charity to participate in thy glory and felicity in thy eternal kingdom. This design, so full of paternal affection and benignity, was marred and impeded by the rebellious angel who prevaricated and became thy enemy. He seduced the earthly parents of the human race, and drew them into his rebellion. Thou didst not, however, abandon or cast away for ever thy weak and inconstant creature. With infinite mercy and love Thou didst give thy only begotten Son to redeem the fallen race. Thou didst decree that He should not only become man, that He should take on Himself all their iniquities, and die in torment and disgrace to atone for them, but also that He should spend on earth a human life for three-and-thirty-years, in order to become a Model for their imitation in the practice of that virtue by which alone they can please and glorify Thee, and recover the inheritance of felicity and glory intended for them at creation. My life, then, should be formed on the model presented by thy Divine Son; my occupation on earth is to imitate his conduct and virtues, and without such imitation I am exposed to be lost for ever and numbered with the reprobate. O my God! how great has been my folly in the past! How little has the imitation of thy Divine Son occupied my thoughts! My life has been, in a great measure, a delusive and treacherous dream, in which I have lost sight of my true destiny. O merciful Creator! illumine my eyes, that I may no longer sleep in death; teach me to follow my celestial guide in the path of life. Give me wisdom and fortitude to enter and to persevere in that narrow way in which He walked, and which alone leads to endless felicity.

Colloquy to our Model and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.—O Divine and merciful Redeemer of the human race ! I can now comprehend why Thou wouldst remain so long on earth, and delay the consummation of thy sacrifice as a victim for the sins of men. To suffer and to die would have cost Thee but an hour ; but it was thy desire to teach us how to live, in order to glorify Thee and thy Eternal Father, and thus to merit those rewards that are reserved for virtue alone. Thou wouldst, therefore, pass on earth through every stage of human life from infancy to mature age, in order to present for our imitation every possible virtue : and, as the malediction caused by sin has rendered the world an abode of misery and death, and a vale of tears, thy mortal life was one uninterrupted chain of pain and sorrow. Never during it was one smile of sensible pleasure or a ray of earthly joy allowed to beam from thy celestial countenance ;— Thou wert indeed “ a man of sorrows.” Those lessons of salvation Thou hast given to man in thy life of severe endurance, O Lord ! how dearly have they cost Thee ! They cost Thee the privation of heavenly beatitude for thy sacred humanity for three-and-thirty years : they cost Thee the privations of poverty which Thou didst endure, the humiliation and contempt to which Thou wast exposed, and the direful corporal sufferings which terminated thy life on earth. Thou didst suffer incomparably more than man ever endured, that no human victim of sorrow might ever imagine that his sufferings could be compared to thine. Merciful Redeemer ! great lover of mankind, let not those lessons be lost with regard to those whom Thou hast chosen as thy special friends and brethren. Oh ! teach us to imitate Thee. Teach us to

copy thy mind, thy Divine Heart, and even thy exterior, that nothing may be found to exclude us from an eternal union with Thee in the kingdom of thy glory. Amen.

“Soul of Christ,” &c.

LECTURE

On the Virtue of Humility.

WITHOUT self-denial no supernatural virtue can be acquired; without humility none can be solid, pure, or perfect. It will be useful, therefore, to speak of this essential virtue in some detail. A great variety is to be observed in the views of spiritual and saintly writers regarding it, but all concur in estimating it, in one respect or another, in the light of the source, the fountain or foundation of all other virtues. Even the theological or divine virtues, as they are sometimes termed—Faith, Hope, and Charity—depend much upon it. One spiritual writer calls it the root, another the parent or mother of all virtues. St. Thomas of Aquin explains the sense in which it is styled the foundation of virtues, in contradiction to faith, which is the rock on which they are established. His explanation is, in substance, as follows:—When an architect desires to erect a lofty building, his first care is to find a solid, immovable foundation; and the loftier the structure is intended to be, the deeper and more firm must that foundation be. Humility is the virtue that performs the task of finding the rock that is sought for, and of rendering it perfectly secure; it performs a task similar to that of the workman who removes all the loose and yielding sand and earth that lie near the surface, and lays

bare the immovable stone or rock that cannot yield to any superincumbent pressure. To speak without figure or comparison, humility is a virtue founded on the infinite truth and justice of God ; it traces to his power and beneficence every good that exists, as they have no other source or cause ; it removes or annihilates all the illusions of self-love, and leaves to man all the deficiencies, the errors, and the evil that belong to his fallen nature.

The necessity of humility is clearly seen under another point of view : without it there can be no real service of God, no real sanctity, no real virtue ; apparent holiness there may be, but it will be merely as a beautiful but hollow shell or disguise ; a species of hypocrisy or spurious pretence of virtue, which can lead but to the offence of God, and to the eternal injury of the soul. The gifts of grace, also, unless accompanied and supported by humility, are full of danger ; and this truth becomes evident at the very first glance, if men do not deceive themselves. This indispensable virtue, as shall be shown, consists of three degrees : 1, self-knowledge, and, arising from that, self-contempt, or a conviction of our own insignificance and nothingness ; 2, contempt for temporal glory and reputation ; 3, a degree for those who are distinguished by elevated and extraordinary gifts, which enables them to attribute all to God, and to remain immovable in their own self-contempt. Without the first degree the soul can neither know itself nor God ; it can never comprehend that it is in itself devoid of every good, and that whatever of good it seems to possess is from its Creator, the fount and ocean of all that is valuable or excellent ; it is led, therefore, to esteem and love itself to the injury of God,

and to yield to the influence of self-complacency. If wanting in the second degree, the contempt of earthly glory, and the esteem of creatures, the soul will always be impelled in any good it may perform to seek admiration and the approval of its fellow-creatures, thus usurping the glory which is due to God alone. If not protected by that profound humility which constitutes the third degree of the virtue, the high and splendid gifts of perfection and apparent sanctity can operate only the ruin of those who profess them: they will, as Lucifer and his deluded followers, become dazzled by the splendour of the exalted qualities which they have received; they will turn giddy at the height to which they have been elevated; they will take to themselves the merit to which they have no claim, and, like the fallen spirits, they will find their ruin in their very excellence, and become enemies to their Creator and Benefactor in consequence of his predilection and munificence in their regard.

It is not, then, surprising that humility should be so essential in the sight of the Creator, and so pleasing to Him, or that pride should be so hateful to Him and so dread a cause of evil to creatures. Humility was one great cause of the exaltation of that Immaculate Virgin who was predestined to become the Mother of God, and Queen of angels and of men, while pride became the cause of ruin to Lucifer, and the millions of exalted spirits who united with him in his rebellion, and were cast together with him into the abyss of perdition. These two opposite fates were alone sufficient to prove at once the value and beauty of the virtue in the sight of God, as well as the reward which it secures, and the enormity of the opposite vice, together

with the evil which it entails on the creature. How striking is the contrast presented in the Divine Word! The sinless Virgin expresses in her hymn the happiness arising from humility: "My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid."* The poison of pride appears in the thoughts and also in the fate of the rebellious angel: "I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit in the mountain of the covenant in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. But yet," says the Divine Spirit, "thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit."† In various parts of Scripture are to be found the highest encomiums of humility, and the most severe condemnations of pride. "Pride is hateful," as declared in Ecclesiasticus, "before God and men."‡ In the Book of Proverbs it is declared that "every proud man is an abomination to the Lord."§ On the contrary, it is promised that "the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds . . . and he shall not depart until the Most High behold."|| When the Immaculate Virgin and Queen had said of herself in her canticle that God "had regarded her humility," she added, "for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."¶ She also says, "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble."** Our Divine Lord has declared that "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;"†† and St.

* Luke, i. 46, 47, 48. † Isai. xiv. 13, 14, 15 ‡ Ecclus. x. 7. § Prov. xvi. 5.

|| Ecclus. xxxv. 21. ¶ Luke, i. 48. ** Ib. i. 52. †† Luke, xiv. 11.

Peter states that "God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace."*

The variety which has been noticed in the views of saintly writers with respect to the nature of this virtue is very remarkable, also, in the distinctions which they note in its degrees of perfection, and in its manifestation and exercise. From the definition of humility given by St. Bernard it might be supposed that he contemplated in it simply a low estimation of self. "Humility is a virtue," writes the holy doctor, "whereby a man, from a true knowledge of himself, becomes vile in his own eyes." Other spiritual writers distinguished seven degrees or various modes of the virtue, and St. Thomas of Aquin discovers as many as twelve. St. Bonaventure confines his views to three, and he is followed, as far as number is in question, by two great masters in spiritual life—St. Ignatius of Loyola, in his book of Spiritual Exercises; and Fr. Rodriguez, in his admirable work on "Christian Perfection."

Although they agree, however, as to the number of degrees in the perfection of the virtue, they differ much in treating of it in consequence of the discrepancy existing in their motives for writing on the subject. St. Ignatius had no intention of treating of the virtue in detail; he speaks of it rather incidentally as a means for disposing the soul for, what he terms, election. Rodriguez, on the contrary, writes an exhaustive treatise on the virtue, in order to render it perfectly known to his readers, and also to teach the means of acquiring it in perfection. As the subject is of the first importance, it will be useful to

* 1 Pet. v. 5.

explain the view of St. Ignatius in some detail. One of the chief objects he aims at, in his Spiritual Exercises, is to lead the soul to embrace the state of life destined for it by Divine Providence. He writes on that point in the following manner:—"And thus, whatever I choose ought to conduce to the end for which I was created; not directing and accommodating the end to the means but the means to the end; as, for example, it happens that many choose to marry, which belongs to the means, and, secondly, to serve God in that state, which service of God is the end. In the same manner there are others who desire benefices, and to serve God with them. So that these do not go direct to God, but wish God to come directly to their inordinate affections."* . . . This election of a state of life he terms immutable; there are other elections on points of a mutable nature, and he directs all to be made during the second week of the Exercises. There are three meditations during this week intended by him to prepare the mind for making these elections with a perfect freedom from passion and bias of every kind: these meditations are those on The two Standards, The Three Classes of Men, and The Three Degrees of Humility. Regarding the first he says:—"And thus, by way of some introduction to it (i.e., election), in the exercise that follows, we will consider the intention of Christ our Lord, and on the other side that of the enemy of our human nature." . . . The second, on "The Three Classes of Men," he introduces in these words: "On the same fourth day will be made the meditation on 'The three Classes of Men,' in order to

* Text of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius translated from the Spanish.

embrace that which is best." . . . The introduction to the meditation on "The three Degrees of Humility" is as follows: "Before anyone enters on the elections, in order that he may be well disposed towards the true teaching of our Lord, it will be very profitable to consider and notice the three following degrees of humility."* . . . He then describes the degrees: "The first degree of humility is necessary for salvation; it is that I so submit and humble myself, so far as I can, as in all things to obey the law of God our Lord, in such wise, that though men should make me lord of all created things in this world, for the sake of my own temporal life,* I would not enter

* The late Very Rev. Fr. Roothan, General of the Society of Jesus, in his admirable commentary on the "Spiritual Exercises" of St. Ignatius, writes as follows regarding the meditations on the "Three Classes of Men" and the "Three Degrees of Humility:"—"Nota diligenter, proprium scopum considerationis hujus de tribus modis humilitatis bene distinctum esse ab illo qui in meditatione de "Tribus Binariis" propositus est. In illâ agebatur potissimum de dispositione animi ad tollendum omne impedimentum. In hac de Tribus Modis Humilitatis animus provocatur ad generosam Christi sequelam in rebus maximè arduis magno affectu amplectendam. Certé tertio modo humilitatis nihil est altius aut perfectius in animi dispositione ad eligendum et sectandum quidquid est in perfectione summum."—"Observe carefully that the peculiar scope of this consideration on the 'Three Degrees of Humility' is quite distinct from that proposed in the meditation on the "Three Classes of Men." In the latter the object was to examine the disposition of the soul to remove all impediments. In that, of the 'Three Degrees of Humility,' the mind is excited to follow our Lord with heroic generosity in undertaking arduous things with a highly chivalrous spirit. Without any doubt, nothing can be imagined higher or more perfect in the disposition of the soul, to elect and embrace all that is most sublime in virtue, than the spirit which inspires the third Degree of Humility."—Exer. Spirit . . . notis illustrata., num. 73.

into deliberation about breaking a commandment, whether divine or human, which bound me under mortal sin.

“The second degree is more perfect humility than the first ; it consists in finding myself in such a state as not to desire nor be more disposed towards riches than poverty, towards honour than dishonour, towards the desire of a long life than a short life, provided only equal service be rendered to God our Lord, and the prospect of the salvation of my soul be equal ; and it consists likewise in never entering into deliberation about committing a venial sin, neither for the sake of all created things, nor even if on that account men should deprive me of life.

“The third degree is the most perfect humility, when, the first and second degree being included, and supposing equal praise and glory to redound to the Divine Majesty, the better to imitate Christ our Lord, and to become actually more like to Him, I desire and choose rather poverty with Christ poor, than riches ; contempt with Christ contemned than honours ; and when I desire to be esteemed as useless and foolish for Christ’s sake, who was first held to be such, than to be accounted wise and prudent in this world.”* Such is the view taken by St. Ignatius of those degrees of humility, as a means of preparing the soul for such an election as may be pleasing to God.

Rodriguez adheres strictly to the formal motive of the virtue of humility itself, and distinguishes it into three degrees, as follows. The first degree he describes as a low estimation of self, arising from true self-knowledge. The second degree consists, according to him, in a willingness

* Text of Spiritual Exercises, *ut supra*.

to be estimated lowly or despised by our fellow-creatures, or, in other words, in a contempt for temporal glory and reputation. The third and highest degree is for the perfect, who despise themselves, through humility, even when they have reached the very summit of virtue, and attribute their holiness and extraordinary gifts of grace to God alone. In the present lecture it will be expedient to adhere to this view of the subject, as it affords occasion to dilate fully on the means of acquiring the virtue.

The first degree of humility, as has been stated, consists in that lowly but just and true estimation of ourselves which is founded on self-knowledge. The value of such knowledge was not unknown to the pagan philosophers of early times, though it had but little influence on their conduct. Perhaps the most precious aphorism of the celebrated sages of Greece was that of Chilo of Lacedemon: "Know thyself." So great a value did he attach to it that he caused it to be written in letters of gold and deposited in the temple of Delphos, and it won for him the enviable title of sage. How much more valuable should it be held by the Christian, as it is the foundation of humility, which has been shown to be the source and parent of every virtue. It is also the antidote to the opposite vice of pride, which has been the first cause of sin, and of the ruin both of angels and men. The deluded seraph, dazzled by the beauty and excellence in which he was clothed by the Creator, forgot his own nothingness, and aspired to be the rival of God as has been said; he was at once smitten with the lightning of divine anger: "But yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit."* Thus ruined by the self-

* *Supra.*

delusion of pride, he led our first parents into a similar snare, saying to Eve: "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."* Thus ignorance or forgetfulness of their own insignificance led to the first falsehood, betrayed intellectual creatures into the guilt of pride, and caused the ruin both of angels and men; self-knowledge is the foundation of that humility in which must be sought the remedy for that ruin. Self-knowledge, therefore, is a treasure of inestimable value; and as gold, silver, and the most precious gems, are buried by nature deep in the bowels of the earth, self-knowledge is to be found profoundly bedded in the innumerable defects and imperfections of our nature, and in searching into and discovering them it must be sought. In penetrating into our deficiencies and deformities, both general and individual, we shall discover abysses, each deeper than the preceding, and at the most profound depth of the lowest we shall find our true level, our proper place and just position in the scale of being. The first abyss is to be fathomed by considering the physical insignificance of the human being as an animated creature residing on the earth. The pagan philosopher, Protagoras, in early times imagined that man was the highest and most perfect of existing beings; both Divine revelation and the progress of profane knowledge have rendered apparent the magnitude of his error. The body of the human being is, comparatively speaking, not far elevated above the worm or insect. The earth which we inhabit, and which to us seems a globe of such vast dimensions, is but one of the minor stars in the firmament,

* Gen. iii. 5

and is quite invisible to innumerable worlds which probably exist around us; the human beings, therefore, that dwell upon the earth seem but little removed in size comparatively from the grains of dust that are carried along by the wind, or of the sand on the sea-shore. Man is truly as Job describes : "Against a leaf that is carried away by the wind Thou showeth thy power."* Such is man in his simplest form and highest perfection in the views of those who deny him a soul; and even those who estimate his nature more truly, and grant him the privilege of an intellectual spirit, do not add much to his importance in a natural point of view. The body of man is insignificant when compared with the material universe; his mind is incomparably more insignificant when compared with the all-perfect mind which is universal and infinite. If you take into account the duration of man's life on earth, it scarce amounts to a moment that can be estimated when compared to eternity or infinite duration? Such is the first abyss of man's lowliness in a natural point of view. 2. The second abyss of his insignificance can be found by each individual by comparing himself numerically with the millions of his fellow-creatures who surround him on the earth. 3. He can descend into the third abyss by following this comparison farther, and contemplating the innumerable millions who have been created since the commencement of the world, and who shall be created before the end of time. In that inconceivable number the individual is totally lost to view, and is as if he had never existed. 4. The fourth abyss will be reached by a comparison of

* Job, xiii. 25.

another kind, which will affect the mind more powerfully, perhaps, than any of those which have been made : it is the comparison of quality, and not that which is merely numerical. Each can contrast himself with his fellow-men, taking into account the admirable qualities and perfections of every kind which have distinguished so many millions : the superiority of virtue, wisdom, genius, and knowledge which has merited for them the approbation, the esteem and love of their fellow-creatures, and their gratitude for the services performed in their regard. At the same time will be discovered the absence of all such qualities which each one in general must remark in himself, with a large amount of positive and visible defects of a contrary nature. Few considerations will be found to engender a deeper sense of confusion, self-reproach and condemnation than the contemplation of this contrast in the candid mind. 5. The fifth abyss will be entered by extending the comparison to the angelic order of being. Though elevated to a high degree in our estimation above the human species, and endowed with wondrous power, knowledge, splendour, and magnificence, yet they are but creatures, and as nothing in the sight of God ; to compare ourselves with his angels will, therefore, assist us much in discovering our true position in his regard. 6. The sixth abyss lies hidden in the consideration that if man exists at all he receives his being from the almighty power of his Creator : of himself he is nothing, and were his Creator to withdraw but for a moment his hand, man would cease to exist and sink into nonentity. Man, therefore, contemplated in himself, is as nothing, and should consider himself as such. This abyss engulfs all that preceded, and

it might appear that none can be imagined more profound. There is, however, another abyss which may be said to engulf even that, and it is to be found in the consideration of sin. 7. This seventh abyss of humiliation consists in this: that man who is in every respect so insignificant and who is of himself nothing, has repaid his Creator, to whom he owes his existence and every good that he enjoys, by offending Him, and has thus perpetrated an evil, at least in one respect, infinite. Every individual, therefore, by self-knowledge finds in himself a being contemptible in every point of view, and incapable of good, but who has, through his innate and essential malice, been guilty of infinite evil as it regards his Creator. This undeniable truth has nothing in it imaginary or exaggerated; it represents the human being as he stands weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and as he is in the views of God.

We have now reached the very lowest abyss of human insignificance and unworthiness; and every individual can discover and perceive, that, in truth and reality, his moral position in the scale of being lies at an inconceivable depth beneath nonentity. Were man abandoned to himself he could find here no refuge, except in the fathomless void of despair. It is, however, at this point that he is taken up by his Creator, and now commences that elevation and wondrous glory that he is destined to enjoy throughout eternity. Nothing can display in a clearer manner the sublime, it might almost be said the divine, excellence of the virtue of humility than the economy of God's operation in the creation and redemption of mankind. In that economy He takes occasion to exercise humility Himself, at the same time that He elevates his creature. He has

done so in a twofold manner: first, on the occasion of creation; secondly, in the redemption of mankind. Infinite greatness, infinite power, and infinite majesty are con-natural with God. To create an endless amount of worlds is as facile to Him as it is to the bird to fly, or to the fish to move or swim in the waters of the ocean. What is difficult for Him, and apparently contrary to his nature and essence, is to lower Himself and descend. This, however, He realised and performed at the creation of man. He made man to his own image and likeness, and allied a being that was like to Himself, and whom He acknowledged as a child with the lowest form of created substance, and formed it to inhabit a body resembling that of the irrational brute. The lowliness of the human being, and, at the same time, his elevation by his Creator have never perhaps been more truly, vividly, and beautifully represented than in the following lines of an English writer; it may be permitted, consequently, to introduce them here:—

“How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
 How complicate, how wonderful is man!
 How passing wonder He who made him such!
 Who centred in our make such strange extremes!
 From different natures marvellously mixed,
 Connection exquisite of distant worlds!
 Distinguished link in being’s endless chain!
 Midway from nothing to the Deity!
 A beam ethereal, sullied and absorbed!
 Though sullied and dishonoured, still divine!
 Dim miniature of greatness absolute!
 An heir of glory! a frail child of dust!
 Helpless immortal! insect infinite!
 A worm! a God!
 How reason reels!
 Oh, what a miracle to man is man!”*

* Young, “Night Thoughts,” Ni. 1.

It is in his wondrous condescension and the beneficence of God towards man that we discover the real, or, as has been said, the almost divine sublimity, beauty, and value of humility. God Himself would be humble, and He would exercise that virtue in an infinite degree. We must here call to mind the remark of St. Bernard regarding the humility attributed to the Creator. There are two forms of humility, writes the saint: one that of the intellect, the other that of the will. The first is inconsistent with the essence of God, who knows his own excellence, and never can be intellectually humble. He has, however, manifested the humility of his will to a wondrous degree. He has displayed this form of humility, in the first place, by creating man to his own image and likeness. He breathed the spirit thus formed into a body of clay, the lowest grade of creation; and, as He would have man to resemble Him in his spirit, He would allow that spirit to be united to man in his clay. Of course God acted thus for his own glory: He could be impelled by no other motive. To lower Himself, therefore, is the highest glory to God. This truth sheds a new light on the words of St. Paul: "But emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For which cause also God hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."* This was a second mode in which the Creator exercised humility in

* Phil. ii, 7.

his relations with his creatures of the human race; a third was that in which He has been pleased to exercise it in descending as man, into the very lowest depths of humiliation and temporal misery. He would be born of a poor and lowly Virgin, unknown to the great ones of the world, and in a position despised by them. He chose to be born in a ruined stable as a companion to the beasts of the field. He was, as the prophet had foretold, "poor and in labours from his youth."* He was in his passion, "reputed with the wicked."† He was as "a worm, and no man; the reproach of men and the outcast of the people."‡ He was scourged as a slave, and executed on a disgraceful gibbet, between two thieves. In all this humiliation however, He was manifesting the glory of humility, and preparing for man that glory destined for him, which was nothing less than to share the throne of the Most High, and to be seated on his right hand for eternal ages. When our Divine Lord and Redeemer had expired on the cross, and by dying in ignominy, had achieved His victory over sin, death, and the powers of darkness, He was committed to the tomb, and remained in all appearance lifeless, for a part of three days. He then arose glorious and triumphant from the grave, clothed the frail human dust which He had assumed in celestial light, and, after a short interval, elevated it to the highest heavens, and united as it was to his divine nature, enthroned it at the right hand of the Father in the splendours of the Godhead; that every tongue should confess, as St. Paul has expressed it, in words already cited, "that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."§ Thus, the vile dust of human nature has been elevated

* Ps. lxxxvii. 16. † Mark, xv. 28. ‡ Ps. xxi. 7. § Supra, Phil. ii. 11.

through the humility of the divine will from that abyss in which it had been buried by sin to a participation of the throne of the Most High.

Whoever desires to acquire solidly the virtue of humility, will find himself assisted in a high degree by meditating deeply and frequently the reflections suggested regarding the various abysses of self-knowledge and contempt which have been described. They should be called to mind each day in the manner which shall be suggested as a preparation for prayer, in the lecture on that subject. They will enable the soul to learn in perfection the wondrous lesson taught by the Incarnate God: "Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart."*

2. The second degree of humility, as has been said, consists in a contempt, and even aversion for worldly glory and the praise of men. Unless the soul has acquired this perfection of the virtue it is in danger continually of becoming the rival of God, in seeking to usurp what belongs to Him alone, and to invade a privilege of which He is essentially and from his very nature jealous, the glory arising from all that is good. This is a treasure the least portion of which the Creator will never allow to be purloined from Him; He cannot do so; to deprive Him of it would be contrary to truth and justice, and his divine perfections forbid Him to permit truth or justice to be violated. Hence He has declared through his prophet, Isaias: "I, the Lord: this is my name, I will not give my glory to another."† This is a consequence of the truth stated in the book of Proverbs: "The Lord hath made all things

* Matt. xi. 29.

† Isai. xlii. 8.

for Himself.”* The meaning is that He made them for his own inalienable glory. He has been infinitely beneficent and lavish in granting to his creatures every other good : He has created for man’s use the magnificent world in which we dwell ; He has provided for all the temporal wants of man, even for their pleasure and delight ; He has given his Divine Son to die for men ; He has given to angels and to them a share in his eternal kingdom, that is, a participation in his infinite glory and felicity ; but his glory He cannot relinquish in the slightest degree, as it would amount to an admission that some other being has a claim to it as creator ; and this, as has been intimated, would be contrary to justice and truth. The human race therefore, as all other creatures, has been formed and placed on earth for the glory of the Creator. The end of man’s being and his existence is essentially that, and if he does not promote that glory he fails in the very object for which he has been called forth from nothing. To this object, then, every faculty of his mind, and every member of his body should invariably be devoted. To this the use of every moment of his time, every action, every motion of mind or body, every desire, every intention, every thought should be directed : it is the one condition on which each has received his being. Such is the meaning of the injunction of St. Paul : “ Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God.”†

Yet, notwithstanding that this obligation is so clear, so evident and essential, few individuals of the human race can be found who comply with it in any degree approaching

* Prov. xvi. 4.

† 1 Cor. x. 31.

to perfection ; and hence, probably, it is that St. John has declared : “ If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* Men are imperilled by all their corrupt and imperfect inclinations, by self-love and the desire of self-gratification, to violate the obligation attached to their creation ; and thus, unless with those saintly persons who lead very mortified lives, there occurs a continual accumulation of venial sin which may account for the protracted sufferings which ordinary Christians are thought to endure in purgatory, though they may seem to have been devoted to religion and piety. There is one irregular desire, however, to which is attached a peculiar malice more injurious to the Creator than others, because it leads men to usurp what is dearest to Him, and which He has declared, as we have seen, that He will never allow to be wrested from Him, and that is the desire of vain glory. This vicious inclination participates in the guilt of Satan, the first enemy of God, and is attended with a great peculiarity and variety both of malice and danger for religious persons. His glory being so specially and essentially dear to God, it should be specially dear and an object of care to those who are in a more particular manner devoted to his service. Such is the case with those who are more closely bound to God in religion ; in fact, they are not only more closely bound to Him, but they are bound for the very purpose of promoting his glory both in their own souls and the souls of others. Again, it is a violation of the end of our creation to seek our own glory and estimation by the exertion of natural talents or gifts of any kind,

* 1 John, i. 8.

but it is a yet more guilty violation to do so by means which are more sacred and connected with religion; in this there is found a malice which seems to partake of the guilt of sacrilege: it amounts to an offence of God by a person and by means especially devoted to Him. The special danger to which religious persons who do not possess the virtue of humility in a high degree are exposed, arises from the circumstance that their very position as being particularly dedicated to God, and the idea of superior sanctity attached to that dedication, create for them in the minds of men generally a feeling of respect and veneration, and this becomes a source of continual temptation to them, both to seek the esteem of others and their own reputation, and to neglect the divine glory which they are bound by their profession to promote. Such is the great and peculiar violation of the end of their creation and of their special consecration to the service of God, as also the danger of multiplied sins to which religious persons are exposed, who are deficient in this second degree of humility. Their weakness in this respect and the desires which they indulge of their own estimation and the admiration of others cause them to incur an alarming amount of sin, the enormity of which they conceal from themselves under the persuasion that it is but venial, and that it has some claim to indulgence. They resemble those servants who, being honoured by their superiors with unlimited confidence and entrusted with the care of property of various kinds, appropriate to themselves or squander continually, things of small value. They reconcile all this to themselves by forming an erroneous conscience, but they cannot escape the consequences or the

condemnation of an all-seeing Judge. The folly, however, of the vain religious, as well as his guilt, is incomparably greater than those of the servant supposed: the latter can and does deceive the human being whom he serves, but the guilt of the unfaithful religious is ever patent to his Divine Lord.

The reflections here suggested may be sufficient to prove the necessity for all persons in religious life of the second degree of humility which may enable them to despise the vain esteem and admiration of men, and to devote themselves with true zeal and fidelity to the duty of promoting the divine glory both in themselves and others: the important question now is, what are the best and most effectual means by which this degree of the virtue may be acquired? It has been observed in a former lecture that virtues as well as vices are habits of the mind: when there is question of acquiring a virtue, therefore, in any degree, it becomes a question of forming a habit of mind. This habit, in order to be firm, permanent, and solidly acquired, must be founded on profound conviction and confirmed by often-repeated acts. Conviction must be the fruit of reflection and consideration, and the acts must be well chosen, so as to render the virtue familiar and easily practical under every point of view. Rodriguez, in his admirable treatise on humility, divides the second degree of the virtue into four subordinate degrees, and he does so for the express purpose of facilitating its acquisition. 1. The first degree, in his view, consists in never seeking praise or estimation from men. 2. The second degree is to suffer contempt with patience. 3. The third consists in rejecting with the will all pleasure and vain excitement when praised

or admired by others. 4. And the fourth is a love and desire of contempt and the ignominy of the cross, in order to resemble more closely our divine model, Jesus Christ. With regard to the first, it is evident that the person who by word, and yet more by action, endeavours to excite the admiration or elicit the praise and commendation of others, becomes guilty of what has been stated regarding the unfaithful servant of God who pilfers from Him what He holds most dear, his glory. It is not necessary, therefore, to dwell at length on what has been already said. It is sufficient to observe, that the evil habit is to be corrected by the repetition of contrary acts in the manner suggested in the lecture on self-denial. These acts will be much facilitated and the acquisition of this second degree of humility in all respects will be deprived of much of its difficulty by having mastered fully the first degree, and having profoundly and practically impressed on the mind the conviction of the nothingness, the deformity, and contemptibility of self. This will require the daily repetition of the necessary reflections, and a practice to facilitate this repetition shall be suggested in a following lecture on mental prayer. The wisdom and propriety of speaking modestly and humbly of self is not taught and practised merely by saints and spiritual writers. They, of course, all combine in inculcating the lesson expressed by St. Bonaventure: "Love to be unknown and to be despised." They teach the humility implied in the words of the Book of Proverbs: "The just is the first accuser of himself."* But even the proud votaries of this world

* Prov. xviii. 17.

acknowledge and do homage to the beauty of humility by imitating its practice though they exclude it from their hearts. To acknowledge and profess a love of glory and reputation was a pagan vice: the lovers of the present world, though they may feel that love to an intense degree, are ashamed to acknowledge it either in word or deed. This fact gives occasion to St. Bernard to remark: 'Humility must be a virtue of great value, as pride assumes its appearance lest it should be contemptible.'

The second subordinate degree of humility consists in suffering contempt with patience. The soul which has reached this perfection of the virtue has learned the lesson and realised the reward pronounced by our Divine Teacher: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls."* This is the sublime and wondrous lesson which excited the astonishment of St. Austin, and caused him thus to apostrophise our Lord: "O teacher and Lord of man, who hast swallowed death in a cup of the poison of pride, what wouldst Thou have us learn of Thee? 'That I am meek and humble of heart.' What! are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that lie hidden in thy bosom reduced to this? Is it so great a thing to be little, that no person can teach it but Thou, the Lord and Teacher of all? Yes, so great and difficult a thing it is to be humble and to lower ourselves in the estimation of others, that men never could have learned it had not God given the example." If the practice of the virtue be difficult, the reward is high and great in proportion: "You shall find

* Matt. xi. 29.

rest for your souls." The person who is proof against the reproaches and insults which he may have to endure without having merited them can enjoy that precious legacy bequeathed to his disciples by our Lord when on the point of being separated from them by death: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth do I give unto you.* This peace is more precious than all the treasures of the earth: it is a foretaste of heavenly rest; "it is the "peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, and which keeps hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,"† according to the words of St. Paul.

To bear with equanimity and meekness the contempt of others, and to indulge in no resentment when made the object of obloquy, calumny, and reproach, is a sublime perfection of humility and difficult of attainment: it is yet more difficult, and requires a higher and more solid and confirmed degree of the virtue to be proof against the seductive voice of praise and commendation, which denotes the third subordinate degree which has been mentioned. This, however, is a perfection for which persons of real and genuine sanctity are very remarkable. To fly from and avoid all that is conducive to reputation and flattering to our natural feelings of pride and self-esteem is a proof of high virtue, but to reject, despise, and repudiate all this, when offered, is far more elevated and difficult to the human soul. It is as if a person should become so insensible to all that is delicious to the taste and pleasing to the palate, that he should taste honey and fail to perceive its sweetness: yet more, to think it nauseous and bitter. Yet

* John, xiv. 27. † Phil. iv. 7.

this is a perfection common to the saints. So spiritualised and heavenly do their faculties become by the habit of virtue that they are elevated above the influence of their natural appetites: they live, in a manner, a supernatural, heavenly life: they live as if in God, or rather He lives in them, according to the inspired sentence of the apostle: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me:"* what is sweet and pleasing to Him is sweet and pleasing to me, and what is bitter and hateful to Him is bitter and hateful to me. This admirable perfection of virtue is one of the invaluable rewards of that system of self-denial that has been described in the lecture on that subject, and which presents the means for the attainment of the highest perfection of every virtue. Not only have the saints been insensible to praise and reputation, but they hated and feared it. They concealed their estimable qualities and virtues, being sensible that they owed them to God and not to themselves; and they feared lest He should withdraw his graces if they should allow Him to be defrauded of the glory due to Him alone, or that He should punish them in some manner if they connive in any degree to the injustice done to Him. They carried the perfection of their virtue to a far more elevated point: they loved and sought for disgrace and ignominy when they could be purchased without the expense of any offence towards God.

We are here led to speak of the fourth subordinate degree of humility, which, under a somewhat different point of view, St. Ignatius of Loyola, contemplates as the summit not only of humility, but of all Christian virtue.

* Gal. ii. 20.

This degree consists in a love and desire of ignomy and disgrace when unmerited, in order to resemble more closely our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, who allowed Himself to be covered with them in order to heal the wounds inflicted by pride on the human race. Pride, as has been already indicated more or less clearly, gave the first impulse to sin, and was the first cause of resistance to the authority of God, and the origin of all evil, both moral and physical. It was so to the angelic creation, and through them to that which is human. It thus became the cause of death both temporal and eternal to man: "As by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death: and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned."* The Eternal Son of God, therefore, who descended from heaven and assumed our mortal nature, not merely to atone for sin by his sufferings and death, but also to heal all the evils of which sin was the cause, decreed to strike at the root of all by correcting pride. Hence He gave in his incarnation and life on earth that example of humility which has been, in part, described "Being in the form of God . . . He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant."† He became man, and exposed Himself to all the miseries of our fallen nature. As man He exposed Himself to such contempt and humiliation as no other man ever endured. He became, as the prophet had described, "As a worm and no man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people."‡ He chose to be born of poor and lowly parents, and to have his birth in a wretched stable, as an outcast, with the beast of the field as his companion. He was "poor, and in labours from

* Rom. v. 12.

† Phil. ii. 7.

‡ Ps. xxi. 7.

his youth.”* He was “a sign to be contradicted,”† according to the words of Simeon. He was rejected by his own people, calumniated, detested, and treated with every indignity, and his stupendous miracles wrought for the glory of his Father, and the temporal and eternal welfare of men, were attributed to the chief of the demons. In his passion were verified the words that had been written of him by Jeremias the prophet: “He shall give his cheek to him that striketh Him, and He shall be filled (*satiabitur*) with reproaches.”‡ The meaning of this language should not be allowed to escape us: He shall be filled or satiated with reproaches and insults. It indicates his desire of them: it displays the humility of his will, and it corresponds with his own divine words at the eve of his passion: “With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer.”§ Notwithstanding the dread nature of his sufferings of every kind He ardently desired them, through love for man, in order to perfect our redemption. His impatience to redeem us caused Him to rejoice when He was falsely accused, condemned, and paraded as a criminal, and in fetters before the rabble; when dishonoured with spittle and buffeted, and when his sacred hair was torn from its roots; his love for us made Him submit with joy when scourged at the pillar as a slave, when crowned in derision with thorns, loaded with his own cross, and when expiring between two thieves on his blood-stained gibbet in the presence of his exulting enemies. The saints, when they contemplate these ineffable humiliations of their Creator, Redeemer and Lord, borne through

* Ps. lxxxvii. 16. † Luke, ii. 34. ‡ Lament. iii. 30. § Luke, xxii. 15.

his love for them, are filled with an ardent desire to make Him a return of love; they look upon it as the highest honour to suffer similar humiliations; to be clothed in his garments and uniform, as it were, and according to the words of St. Ignatius, "to imitate and follow Him, as He is the true way that leads men to eternal life." "He that is truly humble," says St. Bernard, "seeks to pass for a despicable person." The first Apostles have left us an admirable example of this high degree of humility; they exulted with joy when seized and scourged by the council of the chief priests in Jerusalem. "And they indeed went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."* They were filled with delight at being permitted to share in the ignominy and torments of their Divine Lord. They experienced the effects of this perfect virtue which were afterwards described by St. Chrysostom and also by the saintly author of the "Imitation of Christ": He that has elevated himself to this perfection of virtue converts even this low world into a paradise. Such is the happy state of a soul that has fully acquired the second degree of humility.

The third and highest degree of the virtue is only for the perfect, as they alone are placed in the danger of attributing to themselves any graces or favours of a remarkable kind received from heaven. It consists in the feeling of contempt of self, and self-condemnation entertained by the saints, though they cannot conceal from themselves the favours and high perfection bestowed on

* Acts, v. 41.

them by God. This state of mind, when contrasted with the self-applauding pride of sinners, present for observation a seeming paradox of a twofold nature. The deluded sinner applauds himself for fancied degrees of excellence that he does not possess, while the saints condemn themselves for the imperfections and sinful inclinations from which they have been entirely freed and purified. It is to be remarked, also, that the higher the perfection which the saint has reached the more profound is his humility and self-condemnation, and the more necessary is such virtue for him in order to preserve him from self-esteem and the dread fate of the deluded Lucifer and his followers. There is no delusion, however, in the self-condemnation of the saints; in this as in all other respects the virtue of humility is founded on truth and justice. No creature, however perfect, possesses the slightest portion of supernatural good that is not the effect of divine grace emanating from God the fountain of all grace. This we learn, in the first place, from the words of our Redeemer to his Apostles: "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing."* St. Paul speaks the same language as his Divine Master: "God works in us to *will* and to do according to his good pleasure."† "We have received not the spirit of this world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are given to us from God."‡ These words indicate that the perfection of humility of

* John, xv. 4, 5.

† Phil. ii. 13.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 12.

which there is question is a gift of God. The saint writes yet more clearly to the Corinthians in another passage : “ What hast thou that thou hast not received, and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? ”* On such teaching is founded the humility of the saints, and it matters not how great may be the eminence of their sanctity or the perfection of their virtue, they attribute their sanctity and virtue to God, its true and only source, and they look on themselves but as sinful worms. They may, like St. Paul, be elevated to the third heaven in celestial visions or ecstasies and hear mysterious words, which the tongue of man is not permitted to speak ; they may work prodigies and operate miracles surpassing those recorded of their Divine Master, but they are not elevated by empty vanity or self-esteem : firmly fixed on the solid foundation of self-knowledge, they give the glory of those wonders to God, to whom alone it is due, and to themselves they attribute but nothingness, corruption, and sin. Such is the spirit which we remark in St. Paul. He declares of himself that he is the greatest of sinners. The seraphic St. Francis of Assisium expressed a similar conviction. St. Francis Borgia, who studied his own unworthiness so profoundly that he devoted each day two of the several hours that he spent in prayer to the consideration of his own vileness, looked on himself habitually as a brand rescued from the fire of hell. It is related also of him, that in Rome, when duty occasioned him to pass near the stalls of the butchers, he was remarked to quicken his steps lest they might be tempted to pierce him with their

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

knives ; his unconscious fear being produced by the horror which he habitually felt through the conviction of his own deformity and unworthiness. It is difficult for ordinary minds to conceive how men illumined as the saints usually are both by their natural intelligence and supernatural light, entertain with sincerity their feelings of self-condemnation when they contrast themselves with the many great and abandoned sinners among whom they dwell and for whose conversion they pray and labour with such unremitting zeal. Their sentiments are, however, perfectly unaffected and sincere. They reason thus and they reason justly : had it been the decree of Divine Providence that the case of any of these poor sinners and mine had been reversed ; had the high graces so largely lavished on me been conferred on him, and had I been left with the comparatively scanty share bestowed on him, he, perhaps, would have reached a far higher perfection of virtue than I may have acquired, and I might now be more deeply plunged in sin than he is. Keeping their views, therefore, firmly fixed on their own inherent weakness and corruption, and feeling that the predilection of heaven towards them is perfectly gratuitous and not the result of their own merit or exertions, they ever esteem themselves in sincerity as the greatest of sinners. This low estimation of themselves is necessary for them : it is the antidote against the poison of pride ; it is their buckler and their shield against that direful enemy, who being ruined himself by pride when dazzled by the beauty and splendour of the gifts conferred on him by his Creator wounded with the same weapon the human race in the person of unhappy Eve. The royal prophet knew the value of this preservative :

“It is good for me,” he cries before God, “that Thou had humbled me.”* He knew the deadly poison that lies in pride, and which is indicated by the Divine Spirit in the Book of Proverbs: “Pride goes before destruction.”† That was the dart which pierced those unhappy souls alluded to in the book of the Imitation of Christ, who soared so high in virtue that they seemed “to have fixed their nest in the heavens, but who had fallen so low as to feed on the husks of swine.”

True humility, however, is never to be confounded with a grovelling spirit or with the vice of pusillanimity; it is, on the contrary, the foundation of magnanimity, which is never separated from prudence. The humble man is he who can undertake great things without fear, for he depends on God and not on himself; his hope is in the protection of the Omnipotent, and not in the weakness and instability of man. He is the man who is designated in the divine words: “Because he hoped in me I will deliver him. . . . He shall cry to me and I will hear him. I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him and I will glorify him.”‡ With these sacred words correspond those of the humble Virgin, elevated for her humility to the dignity of Queen of Heaven: “My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid . . . Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is his name . . . He hath showed might in his arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and He hath exalted the humble.”§

* Ps. cxviii. 71. † Prov. xvi. 18. ‡ Ps. xc. 14, 15. § Luke, i. 46 et Seq.

Seventh Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the two Standards.

IN the meditation here presented St. Ignatius proposes for consideration the services of the two chiefs who seek for the allegiance of every individual of the human race. No human creature has ever existed or ever will exist who is not invited both to the service of God and also to that of his eternal enemy, and the saint presents for meditation these opposite invitations. It affords occasion to the soul to ratify the resolution already formed to love Jesus Christ and follow Him as our King and Leader, and also, with that which follows under the title of "The three Classes of Men;" it is intended by the saint to prepare the soul for what he terms "election." Election for persons who have not as yet chosen for themselves a fixed state of life, is the selection of that state to embrace which they may be called by divine grace, or which may seem to promise the greatest security for their eternal salvation. With regard to those who are already engaged in a permanent state of life, as religious and priests are, election is the determination of that point of perfection in virtue to which

they may seem to be invited by divine grace. To decline the invitation of the Spirit of God, and to neglect to aspire to that point or eminence of virtue, would imply an infidelity to grace, or a rejection of it that could not fail to endanger much eternal salvation. There may occur in the life of any individual other important occasions for election, and the mind may be prepared to form a decision unbiassed by passion or inclination in a manner similar to that suggested here.

1 *Point*. The standard of Satan.

2 *Point*. The standard of Jesus Christ.

3 *Point*. The deliberation and election.

Preparatory prayer : "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude*. Historical or practical view of the subject as stated.

2 *Prelude*. Imagine Satan enthroned near Babylon ; the Redeemer standing near Jerusalem, surrounded by his Apostles and saints.

3 *Prelude*. Beg that you may discover and reject the delusions of Satan, and learn the divine will in your regard.

1 *Point*. The service and standard of Satan. Contemplate the enemy of God and man, seated on a lofty throne near the voluptuous city of Babylon ; the throne magnificent and richly decorated, but surrounded by flames. He bears in his countenance the signs of reprobation and relentless malice. His emissaries crowd around him, and he sends them forth to tempt and destroy mankind, to dishonour God, and promote iniquity by every means. Their weapons are those allurements by which they excite the passions of men ; "the concupiscence of the

flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.”* Contemplate with horror their success. Cast your view over the world. What millions unreclaimed from idolatry! how foul the worship they pay to idols! How many countries are seduced by heresy! how obstinate, how seductive are its ministers! Among Christians, what immorality, what irreligion, what neglect of salvation! What corrupters of youth, what incentives to vice, what myriads of pestiferous books on every side! Must not the heart bleed at such a prospect? Remember hell, and think of the thousands plunged daily therein. What cause of sorrow for the Redeemer! for the Eternal Father! What exultation and triumph for Satan and his ministers! How do they blaspheme and reproach the meek and merciful Redeemer! “Behold your favoured creature, man; whom does he serve? See how he dishonours you—how willingly he takes my bait. Behold even your chosen friends; whose ministers do some of them prove themselves to be?” Thus he blasphemes the Most High.

2 Point. The service of Jesus Christ. Behold Him on a plain near Jerusalem, “beautiful above the sons of men.”† His standard is his cross, which He has stained with his blood. He is surrounded by his apostles, to whom his lessons are: “Go, preach the Gospel to every creature.”‡ “Be wise as serpents and simple as doves.”§ Fear not, I am with you—“a hair of your head shall not perish.”|| Look around, and behold the small number of the true servants of God. They resemble the olives re-

* 1 John, ii. 16. † Ps. xliv. 3. ‡ Mark, xvi. 15.

§ Matt. x. 16. || Luke, xxi. 18.

maining on the tree, or the scattered grapes after the gathering or vintage. Do I desire to increase the number? Shall the Blood of the Redeemer be shed in vain? How did the Apostles labour and succeed? By arms contrary to those of Satan. By self-denial, poverty, disinterestedness, and humility. By these they reached eternal felicity and glory, and conducted others thither by them and prayer. What means do I use to counteract sin and the efforts of Satan? Am I a faithful and courageous combatant for my Divine Leader? Do I merit the promised crown?

3 *Point.* The deliberation and election. My soul, in the silence of passion, and while you are illuminated by the Spirit of God, contemplate these different chiefs, and deliberately choose him whom thou wilt follow. Are you tempted to follow the first? Hear his invitation: he presents the delusive bait, the seductive poison. Are you led by pleasure? He promises, as heretofore: "No, you shall not die the death."* Thus he seduced Eve. Is gold your attraction? Gold he will promise, also, though he cannot always give; and again declares, "you shall not die the death." Are you proud and vain? He will engage to gratify you: but be not deceived, as Eve: know the cost of following him—remorse here, eternal misery hereafter. Are you attracted to the benign, the amiable Redeemer? What does He require? To labour for a time, cheered on by his example. He promises not delusive, defiling pleasure, but peace here, eternal felicity hereafter; not gold or silver, but that treasure above, of which nothing can deprive you; not honour from men, but from your

* Gen. iii. 4.

Creator. But, religious soul, you are not now to choose; thou hast been long enrolled under his banner. It remains that thou dost serve Him faithfully, and with fervent zeal. Renew your vows fervently, both those of baptism and religion, and resolve to be ever faithful to them in the most perfect manner possible for you.

Colloquy to the ever Blessed Virgin Mary.—Immaculate Virgin, Mother of the Eternal Son of God, the Redeemer of mankind, in thee was verified the promise made by God at the beginning, that “the woman should crush the serpent’s head.”* But that foul, malignant enemy of God and man continues to deceive and destroy innumerable millions of the human race. He never ceases to contend against thy Divine Son or to delude and win over those who are especially consecrated to the service of God. We fly to thee, O powerful Virgin; we crave thy protection and thy aid, that we may not again become his victims or his slaves. Obtain for us the graces indispensable for our perseverance; above all, fidelity to our sacred engagements of baptism and religion. “Hail Mary,” &c.

Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and heavenly King.—Oh! Divine Lord and guide of my soul, Eternal Son of God, I have been long especially consecrated to Thee; am I still called on to choose between thy service and that of thy dark infernal enemy? Yes, O merciful Lord, as long as life endures I shall ever be exposed to the temptations of my powerful, insidious, and malignant adversary, and to the dangers arising from my weakness, inconstancy, and corrupt inclinations. Many

* Gen. iii. 15.

who "seemed to have built their nest in heaven have fallen and become delighted with the husks of swine." How many have there been who seemed to have reached a high degree of perfection in virtue that have been betrayed by pride, as Lucifer, and at the very termination of their trial and pilgrimage have lost themselves for ever! Oh! direful power of our spiritual enemies! Oh! deplorable inconstancy of the human soul! There is no security for the religious or the Christian except in humility, diffidence in self, prayer, vigilance, and confidence in Thee, Redeemer of the world. I renew at this moment O Divine King and Leader of my soul, my consecration to Thee. Thou art my Lord and my God. Grant me fidelity and perseverance that with thy apostle I may "fight the good fight" to the end, and secure "the crown of justice"* Thou hast purchased for me with thy blood. "Soul of Christ," &c.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father. Eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when the rebellious angel had seduced the parents of the human race, and involved them and their descendants in one common reprobation, Thou didst compassionate them in thy mercy, and promised thy only begotten Son to redeem and preserve them from perdition. But the same powerful, insidious, and unsparing enemy still pursues every individual of their offspring, and succeeds in destroying for eternity countless millions of those redeemed. "He goes around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."† O Celestial Father! I have long been enrolled under the banner of thy Divine Son as

* 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

† 1 Peter, v. 8.

one of his special and favoured followers to combat against thy enemy, but as long as this life of exile continues I can never be certain of victory. Innumerable souls more virtuous and perfect than mine, perhaps, have been deluded and betrayed by Satan, and now share his reprobation and his torments. Oh! save me in thy mercy: allow me not to become his victim. Do not permit the blood of thy Divine Son to be shed for me in vain. Grant me that fidelity to my engagements, that humility and diffidence in myself, and that confidence in Thee that may secure me to the end of this transient life, and lead me to that beatitude intended originally by Thee, and purchased for me when it had been lost, by the blood of thy Divine Son. “Our Father,” &c.

NOTE.—As the practical consideration for this day is of primary importance, it is recommended to read it over and make it in part the subject of the examen of the interior: the mind will be thus prepared to draw from the consideration a greater amount of profit.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Three Classes of Men.

The religious soul having ratified its resolve in the last meditation to follow Jesus Christ with fidelity, this meditation is intended to lead it to elect that grade of perfection in which it should endeavour to serve God. In it are proposed for our contemplation a similitude of three classes of men, each of whom has amassed a treasure by some means not reconcilable with virtue, but all have now

conceived a desire more or less sincere to correct past errors and to secure their salvation. This is a similitude which every person may easily apply to himself. We all may have one or another treasure to which we have become attached by some inordinate inclination that has not been eradicated. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,"* says the Redeemer. Ponder the example of these men, and deliberately choose that which reason and faith should lead you to imitate.

Preparatory prayer : "My God," &c.

1 *Point*. The first class defer their decision to the end of life, and have no effectual design or determination to save their souls.

2 *Point*. The second class renounce all attachment to what is sinful, but cannot resolve to resign the objects which engage their affections and endanger their souls.

3 *Point*. The third class, who are comparatively few, are prepared to resign all, both in affection and effect, in order to secure God's favour and the rewards of heaven.

1 *Point*. The first class is formed of persons who experienced a desire, indeed, to save their souls, but their desire, like that of the sluggard, is never effectual: "The sluggard willeth, and willeth not."† They tremble at the thought of judgment and of hell, and they would gladly avoid their terrors; they are excited at the contemplation of heaven, and they would be happy to secure its felicity, but neither the awful danger of the former, nor the powerful attractions of the latter, can compel them to make those effectual exertions, or submit to those sacrifices,

* Luke, xii. 34.

† Prov. xiii. 4.

which are essential for salvation. Thus they journey on through life in a state of indetermination, of mingled alarm, hope, and desire; and they are found by death still possessed of their ill-got treasure, and loaded with all their debt of atonement and reparation. Recall to mind the death of the tepid, and endeavour well to comprehend the danger of these men. Examine closely your own interior, and see if there be a resemblance. What are your attachments? What your treasure? Does it stand between your soul and God?

2 Point. The second class is made up of those who are prepared to divest themselves of all inordinate affection for their treasure, as far, at least, as it is an obstacle to salvation: but the treasure itself, the object of their affections, they cannot resolve to resign. They bargain, as it were, with God for heaven: so much they will give and no more. Unwilling to bend their own inclinations to those of God, they would have Him conform his eternal decrees to their imperfect wills, and they would induce their Creator, to whom they owe their whole being, to accept of a portion, a fragment of their affections. What an absurdity! What ingratitude! What infidelity! Observe their danger; God is not thus to be trifled with: "I called," He says, "and you refused . . . I will also laugh in your destruction."* The mere resistance to God's call is a source of awful danger. What was the crime which drew on the reprobation of the Jews? "You always resist the Holy Ghost."† The men whose conduct we contemplate are exposed to all the penalties of abused, rejected

* Prov. i. 24-26.

† Acts, vii. 51.

grace. Compare, my soul, your own state with theirs. Are you prepared to abide with inviolable fidelity by the engagement you made of following your Lord? "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go." Or are you content to serve God after your own manner, by halves? Remember the truth, that God is a jealous God, that He hates rapine in a holocaust.

3 *Point*. The third class comprises those comparatively few persons who, profoundly impressed with a sense of the importance of salvation, as well as of all they owe to their Creator, and fixed in a determination to serve Him and to secure heaven, are prepared to resign all, both in desire and effect, in order to realise their object. They value not their temporal treasures when placed in competition with those which are eternal; and their minds are in a state of equilibrium, either to retain or to resign them, as the voice of God may demand, or show it to be most conducive to his glory and their own eternal good. These men are come, in the estimation of St. Ignatius, to that temper of mind in which they can follow with docility the divine call, and proceed with security to make their election. Ponder on these three different states, and fix on that which you are determined to imitate. Assist your mind to lay aside every bias which may arise from natural inclination, by attending to a few instructions of St. Ignatius. The first is, to consider what advice you would in candour give to a person unknown to you, who should ask your advice in such a matter? The second is, to consider what you will desire to have done at the hour of death. The third, what you would desire to have done at the day of judgment. The fourth, that if you feel a

dread of being called by God to make any certain sacrifice, in order to overcome this feeling you form a desire, and pray that He may demand it of you.

Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin.—Immaculate Mother of our Redeemer and Queen of angels and of men, who didst reach a height of sanctity far elevated above all other creatures, and who didst serve your Creator with a fidelity that prepared you for the dignity and glory you now enjoy in his eternal kingdom, obtain for us by thy powerful intercession grace to imitate your fervour. It might seem to us that your transcendent virtue was miraculous and an unmerited gift of God, but such an idea would be erroneous and contrary to the truth. One miracle alone was wrought in favour of your virtue, that of the Immaculate Conception or freedom from original sin. On this foundation of perfect purity of soul was raised the structure of your incomparable sanctity by inviolable fidelity and unfailing fervour in your correspondence with grace, in the manner more or less usual with all the eminent servants of God. Gain for us, O most benign and merciful Virgin, grace to imitate your example, and to sacrifice all things to secure eternal life. “Hail Mary,” &c.

Colloquy to the Divine Spirit of God.—It belongs to Thee, O Omnipotent Spirit of the Father and the Son, to illumine the souls of men, and to inspire them with fortitude to combat their spiritual enemies and to advance in virtue as long as life on earth endures: breathe into our souls thy consoling and invigorating grace; inflame them with that celestial fire which imparts ardour in the discharge of duty, and impels us to proceed with fidelity and speed in the path of virtue marked out for us by our

Redeemer and Model. Thus alone can we secure the real rewards promised to the faithful servant. "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ.—Divine Redeemer and guide of our souls, Thou hast not only paid the penalty of our sins with thy sacred blood and given us in thy life a model for our imitation, but Thou hast purchased for each individual those celestial graces by a correspondence with which our salvation is to be secured. Thou hast said, O Lord, "He that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple,"* and that he who is not prepared to leave all that is dearest in this world, or who will not take up his cross and follow Thee, is equally excluded from thy friendship and service. A large amount of grace is required in order to gain all this, but such grace Thou hast abundantly purchased for us, and it is presented to one and all. Our co-operation, however, is required, and without that co-operation thy mercy and thy gifts tend only to secure our condemnation. Great is our guilt and folly, Divine Lord and Judge of the living and the dead, that we do not reflect more constantly on this essential truth. We forget that the invitation to follow Thee is a grace purchased at an infinite price, and we squander and neglect it as if it were unworthy of attention. Our conduct resembles that of the foolish virgins in the parable, or that of the indolent servant that buried his talent, and we expose ourselves to the danger of perishing as they did. O merciful Lord! compassionate our folly, remove our blindness, and correct our sloth;

* Luke, xiv. 33.

grant us to know and value the inestimable graces on which depends eternal life, and render us careful to correspond with them. Let us be numbered among thy true, faithful, and diligent servants, and teach us to imitate those who serve the lords of this world. How should we blush when we compare our conduct with that of the servants of earthly monarchs and masters: what splendour and beauty shine in their attire! What care do they employ to remove all that can offend the eye of those whom they serve! What vigilance, what activity, what diligence they display to fulfil or anticipate the wishes of their lords! And in us, what tepidity, what negligence, what indifference appear in the service of our loving, Divine, eternal King and Redeemer! Have mercy, O Lord! and fill us with the spirit of thy true servants and followers. "Soul of Christ," &c.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—O celestial, merciful, and loving Parent! who hast given thy only begotten Son not only to redeem the human race with his blood and life on earth, but also to purchase for us that inheritance in heaven which had been lost by sin, and those graces without which none can regain it; take pity on our cowardice, our sensuality, our blindness, and our sloth, and let us feel that without constant exertions on our part we never can secure our heavenly birthright. The rulers, lords, and masters of this world are served with fidelity, care, and energy, and no individual hopes to obtain a reward without having exerted himself to merit it; but we seem to treat Thee, O God of infinite wisdom and justice! as a person ignorant of his rights and claims, or careless or powerless to enforce them; we seem to flatter

ourselves with the hope of obtaining thy celestial treasures without fidelity, labour, or care; we lay claim to thy heavenly crown without having lawfully contended. Grant us, O Lord! a ray of celestial light to dispel this blindness, and penetrate our souls with a conviction of the necessity of fervour and fidelity to secure eternal rewards. Amen. "Our Father," &c.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION

On Humility.

1 *Point.* The first degree of humility—self-contempt founded on self-knowledge.

2 *Point.* The second degree of humility—contempt for the esteem of the world.

3 *Point.* The third degree of humility—love of the ignominy of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Point.* Self-contempt founded on self-knowledge. Humility is held to be the foundation of all virtues, as the opposite vice of pride was the origin of all sin into which it betrayed Lucifer and his unhappy followers. That deluded angel, dazzled by the beauty and excellence bestowed on him by the Creator, forgot his own nothingness, aspired to be the rival of God, and said: "I will ascend above the height of the clouds: I will be like the Most High."* He was at once struck with the lightning

* Isai. xiv. 14.

of God's anger: "But yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit."* Thus ruined by the self-delusion of pride, he led our unhappy first parents into a similar snare, saying to Eve: "You shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil."† This ignorance of their own insignificance led to pride, the source of the first falsehood, and caused the ruin both of angels and of men: humility founded on truth and knowledge of the creature's nothingness becomes the source of the virtue which forms a remedy for that ruin. As gold, silver, and the most precious gems are buried by nature deep in the earth, the inestimable virtue of humility lies profoundly bedded in the abyss of our numerous defects. There are seven abysses, one deeper than the other, in the most profound depths of which true self-knowledge is to be found. We descend into the first abyss by considering the physical insignificance of the human being. Protogoras, a pagan philosopher, held that man was the most perfect being in existence; modern discoveries in natural philosophy have reduced him to his proper level in the scale of creation. The earth, which seems to its inhabitants an orb of such magnitude, is but a star of inferior size in the firmament, and men are but as diminutive worms that dwell upon it. They move on it for a short space of time, which is but a moment compared to eternity, then disappear, and are seen on earth no more. 2. The second abyss is found by the individual in comparing himself with his fellow-creatures, of whom near a thousand millions at present inhabit the earth. 3. The third abyss is entered by a comparison

* Isai. xiv. 15.

† Gen. iii. 5.

with the countless millions who have existed since the beginning of time, and who are destined to be created before its end. In such a number each individual appears as insignificant as a particle of dust which is borne before the wind, or as a grain of sand on the sea-shore. 4. A fourth abyss will be reached if we compare ourselves with our fellow-creatures, not merely numerically as one among so many millions, but taking into account the splendid qualities for which so many have been distinguished; the powers of mind, the knowledge, the wisdom, and the superior virtues which have merited the admiration of their fellow-beings, or rendered them even acceptable to heaven. This comparison will affect the mind probably more than that which is merely numerical. 5. We shall descend into the fifth abyss by contrasting ourselves with the angelic spirits, who are almost as deities when compared with men, though they are as nothing in the presence of the infinitely perfect and Almighty Being who has given them their existence. 6. The sixth abyss is such as to swallow up, in a manner, all that have been contemplated, and it is found in the consideration that the individual in himself is really nothing. The being that he enjoys is the gift of another; as a creature he never could arise from nonentity, and unless sustained by his Creator he would return to it. 7. It might now appear that there is now no deeper abyss into which a human being could descend in meditating his own lowliness, and yet there is one which must be looked on as the most profound of all, and the most calculated to create in the mind a feeling of shame and self-contempt. It is found in the fact, that each individual must acknowledge

himself guilty of foul ingratitude against his Creator and generous Benefactor, as one use made by those who have enjoyed for any length of time the being conferred on them has been to offend by its abuse their Creator from whom they have received it. Each should acknowledge, therefore, that he is in himself a foul, contemptible nothing, that has employed the existence given him in doing evil. Such, in truth, and when weighed in the unerring balance of eternal wisdom, is the true value of the human being, and such is his place in the scale of creation. That self-contempt, therefore, which constitutes the first degree of humility, and which is the immediate fruit of self-knowledge, is nothing more or less than simple truth, and on that account principally it is pleasing to God, who is truth itself.

2 Point. The second degree of humility: contempt for the esteem of the world. The soul that is deeply impressed by its own deformity, and that has learned sincerely to know and despise itself, is prepared to advance to the second degree of humility, and to comprehend the hollowness and deceit of that glory that is founded on the admiration of men. The first degree of pride leads men to dispute the authority of God, and to refuse Him the homage that is due to Him alone; that which is founded on a love of the esteem of others impels them to rob Him of his glory. This is an injustice which He has expressly declared He will never tolerate. He is both infinite truth and justice, and what is contrary to them must be hostile and inimical to Him: "I, the Lord: this is my name: I will not give my glory to another."* The end of our creation is to

* Isai. xlii. 8.

glorify God : our submission, homage, and praise are the only tributes that his divine perfections and justice to Himself compel Him to exact from us. All other things, the treasures both of heaven and earth, He bestows on us with a generous, a lavish abundance. He has given even the blood of his Divine Son as our ransom ; his glory however, He will not, He cannot give. We here perceive at once the grievous nature of that pride that leads men to seek the credit and admiration that belong to God alone. We can do nothing of ourselves. Not only our actions, and their effects and consequences, but even the faculties by which we operate are the gifts of God. To seek reputation, therefore, by talents or performances of any kind ; to accept of praise for works of genius or art, is a species of rapine committed against God. To desire or accept of praise or reputation for anything of a spiritual nature, for virtue or good works is in a special manner criminal and offensive to the Creator. This was the pride which our Lord condemned in the Pharisees. To spend days and nights in prayer, to fast and practise great austerities, to convert whole nations for such motives, would but add to guilt. The sentence on all who seek their own reputation must ever be : " They have received their reward."* Yet how universal is such vanity in the world ! How often is it found in the souls of religious ! How truly necessary, therefore, must be this second degree of humility if we are to hope for any reward in heaven ! It is not less necessary to secure peace on earth which can never be secure for the proud and vain : " Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls."†

* Matt. vi. 16.

† Ib. xi. 29.

3 *Point.* Love of the ignominy of the Cross of Jesus Christ. This is the summit of religious and supernatural virtue, and though comparatively few attain to it in perfection, every religious person should keep it in view and aspire to its acquisition. Pride has suggested to angels and to men, to aspire to a similitude with God and to usurp a portion of his glory. He has been pleased to descend to the lowest point of humiliation, and has rendered it obligatory on men to imitate Him in his assumed lowliness if they desire to participate in his real glory and felicity. "Who, being in the form of God," says St. Paul, "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men . . . He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."* In becoming man He chose the lowest place, and during his mortal life sought continually extreme humiliation. He was born in a stable as an outcast, and among his first companions were the beasts of the field, an ox and an ass. The prophet had written of Him: "But I am a worm and no man: the reproach of men and the outcast of the people. All they that saw me laughed me to scorn."† He was "reputed with the wicked," scourged as a vile, unworthy slave, and died crucified between two thieves. Ignominy, therefore, is as his uniform, and those who desire to be numbered among his favourite followers must desire to share in his humiliations, and to bear a portion of his disgrace. This is the virtue exercised by St. Paul when he said: "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world

* Philip. ii. 6, 7, 8.

† Ps. xxi. 7, 8.

is crucified to me and I to the world.”† St. Ignatius describes the perfection of this degree of humility in the following manner: Suppose that there were no question of sin, not even of the slightest venial sin, and that the divine glory were equal whichever side be chosen, yet, through love of Jesus Christ and a desire to imitate Him more perfectly, ignominy should be preferred to honour, and poverty to riches. To acquire such virtue is impossible to human nature, but souls that love the Divine Lord Jesus, and are assisted by the powerful grace of heaven, may possess it in a high degree.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The first on the Passion of our Lord. Scenes in the Garden of Olives.

- 1 *Scene.* The entrance to the Garden.
- 2 *Scene.* He leaves his disciples and prays.
- 3 *Scene.* His agony and sweat of blood.
- 4 *Scene.* He is seized by his enemies.
- 5 *Scene.* He is bound and led away.

Preparatory prayer: “My God,” &c.

1 *Prelude.* Behold your Redeemer prostrate, sweating blood.

2 *Prelude.* Beg for the spirit of the cross.

* Gal. vi. 14.

1 *Scene.* The entrance to the Garden. The Redeemer now has left to his disciples the last divine pledge of his love in the adorable Eucharist : “ Having loved his own . . . He loved them unto the end.”* He prepares for the dreadful conflict of his passion : He ascends the Mount of Olives, silently attended by his trembling followers. A torrent of anguish deluges his soul, and He exclaims : “ My soul is sorrowful even unto death.”† O my soul, the Divine Jesus is sorrowful ! His meek and tender Heart is ready to burst with agony ; He that brings consolation to all, on whom the angels delight to fix their view, is sorrowful even to death, and were He not supported, anguish would dissolve his frame. Approach, and if you cannot remove, at least participate and sympathize in his passion.

2 *Scene.* He leaves his disciples and prays. “ Watch ye and pray,” said He, “ lest you enter into temptation.”‡ Let this lesson sink deeply into my soul : if I but pray I need not fear temptation. The disciples of Jesus neglect the admonition, they listen to the imperfect suggestions of the weak flesh, they, in consequence, desert their Master, and one of them denies Him. The Redeemer in his anguish leaves his dearest friends, and seeks support from heaven alone. This is also a lesson for me. To whom have I recourse in affliction ? Is it to God ? Did I follow the example of my Redeemer, I should, like Him, receive consolation from above. “ Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from me : but not my will, but thine, be done.”§ My soul, learn from these words with meek submission to bow beneath the paternal hand that strikes you,

* John, xiii. 1.

† Mark, xiv. 34.

‡ Ib. xiv. 38.

§ Luke, xxii. 42.

Jesus is innocent, and He submits; you have been guilty, and will you resist? "And being in an agony, He prayed the longer."* Here learn perseverance in prayer. The stream of mercy is stopped but for a time, that it may flow with more abundance into your soul.

3 *Scene*. His agony and sweat of blood. "And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground."† Here, my soul, is truly agony of mind! What is it that wrings in such a manner the Divine, the elevated Heart of Jesus? Approach Him and demand. "Torrents of iniquity have disturbed Him."‡ Confusion has covered Him as with a garment. His pure, immaculate soul finds itself enveloped in the hideous crimes and enormities of men. Study here what sin is, and search for those black and dreadful stains which you have cast on your Redeemer, Yet you can scarce afford a tear for sins that are your own, while He weeps blood for the sins of others. The anticipation of his torments agonizes, too, the mind of Jesus. Learn, then, what those torments must have been: how exquisite! how extreme! Another anticipation wrings the soul of the Redeemer. He foresaw the millions that, notwithstanding his blood, were yet to be plunged in endless perdition. He saw them fall in his prophetic view, like the leaves of autumn, into the fiery gulf. Let me live in fear and make my election sure.

4 *Scene*. He is seized by his enemies. Whilst Jesus agonizes his apostles sleep. He lovingly reproaches them: "Could you not watch one hour with me?"§ It is so even now; and whilst He is crucified by great sinners, those who pro-

* Luke, xxii. 43.

† Ib. xxii. 44.

‡ Ps. xvii. 5.

§ Matt. xxvi. 40.

fess to follow Him, decline to share his cross, and desert Him in his sufferings. The betrayer comes and offers the treacherous embrace. O Judas ! why hast thou come ? Oh, depravity of the heart of man ! Awful consequence of infidelity to grace ! Dreadful ruin of the weak, unfaithful follower of Christ ! What should I be if not sustained by the sweet and powerful grace of heaven ? A Judas, or worse than Judas. O sacred poverty, sure bulwark of the religious soul, how should we prize thee, that dost protect us from defiling avarice ! What new agony to the Redeemer ! “The man of his peace, in whom He hoped, who ate at his board of delicious meats,”* His cherished friend betrays Him ! How bitter to Him, too, must be the defection of the religious soul that abandons him by tepidity and sin !

5 *Scene.* He is bound and led away. O sacred bonds which confine the hands of the Omnipotent ! He had created all things ; He had burst the iron bonds of death, and He meekly gives his hands to be bound by weak mortals, and follows “like a lamb led to the slaughter.” With this scene before my view, how should I lament the rebellion of my will ! How dear to me should be the sacred bonds of obedience, which afford me an opportunity of imitating my Redeemer ! How soft should they appear when compared with his ! He is hurried away to ignominy and death.

Colloquy to the captive Redeemer.—Omnipotent Creator and Lord of the universe, who art, at the same time, the meek Lamb of God, and who art now bound in fetters to

* Ps. xl. 10.

be led by thy merciless enemies to the fatal gibbet to be immolated as a holocaust for the human race, what shall I say to Thee?—in what words shall I address Thee? Shall I call on Thee to exert thy power to crush thy cruel persecutors and punish them for their enormous crimes against the God of holiness and majesty? Alas! where then shall be found a victim to take my place and save me from perdition? Who, then, shall atone for sin and save men from those flames that it has lighted up in the dread abyss? Oh, no; I must rather encourage thee, O Lord, to complete the designs of thy love and to consummate the sacrifice Thou art prepared to offer. Thou hast taken upon thyself all our iniquities to wash them away with thy blood. We learn from thy agony how much the hideous load has cost Thee: it has forced from thy Divine Heart the blood of infinite purity which has suffused thy sacred body and stained the earth with crimson. Oh! how enormous must be the foulness and deformity of sin! How dread must be the perversion and guilt of those who love it, above all of those who persevere in it! How dread and wondrous it is that creatures who possess no good of themselves should be capable of perpetrating infinite evil, and should be often guilty of it! How yet more wonderful it is that Thou shouldst love such creatures, and die for those who are capable of such enormous injury to Thee? While Thou wast in thy agony thy chosen but weak disciples slept. Thus sinners sleep in their guilt, regardless of thy injury, forgetful of thy love, and reckless regarding their own perdition. The anticipation of that perdition was another cause of thy agony. In thy prophetic view Thou didst behold them, as Thou hadst seen Lucifer and his angels fall

as a shower of lurid fire into the abyss, and thy agony was more severe, because neither thy love nor thy torments could save them in their obstinate guilt and folly. Thou didst love them as Thou didst the treacherous and abandoned Judas, and, like him, they betray Thee for gold and foul indulgence of every kind ; and they will continue to do so to the end of time. Still meekly awaiting the conversion of those who are so wise as to avoid perdition, Thou givest the omnipotent hands of thy justice to be bound as Thou didst at Gethsemani, when Thou didst allow thyself to be led away by thy enemies to ignominy, torment, and death. Permit me not, O merciful and loving Redeemer ! to be the victim of my evil inclinations : permit me not to be another Judas, or to be lost for ever, notwithstanding thy love and thy atoning blood. “Soul of Christ,” &c.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—Eternal Father of the Redeemer ; Father, too, of the human race, how wondrous has been thy love for thy weak and unworthy creatures ! How true is thy Divine Word, that “thy mercies are above all thy works !”* To redeem an unworthy slave Thou hast given thy only begotten Son : to elevate the low and contemptible Thou hast submitted to ignominy and outrage the Lord of infinite majesty and glory : to save the guilty wretch that has insulted Thee, Thou hast delivered innocence and holiness to ignominy, torments, and death. Guilty man calls to Thee for mercy, and Thou dost forgive him : Thou dost reward him, too, with glory and felicity for confiding in Thee ; but thy Divine Son cries to Thee in his agony, and thy ears are closed to his prayer : Thou dost

* Ps. cxliv. 9.

refuse to hear Him. What must be the severity of thy justice, O Lord! with regard to those who despise thy mercy, and continue to outrage by sin both Thee and the Divine Victim immolated for them! Let not such be my fate, O Lord! let me never be confounded.

“Our Father,” &c.

Eighth Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the Passion of our Lord.—The Tribunals.

- 1 *Scene.* The tribunal of the high priest.
- 2 *Scene.* Jesus is led to Pilate.
- 3 *Scene.* The tribunal of Pilate.
- 4 *Scene.* Jesus is led to the court of Herod.
- 5 *Scene.* He is condemned to be scourged.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude.* Behold your Redeemer bound as a malefactor, and led by his exulting enemies.

2 *Prelude.* Pray for humility and patience in reproach and persecution.

1. *Scene.* The tribunal of the high priest. Follow your Lord as He is dragged by his exulting enemies to the court of the priests. How do they mock the meekness and submission of the Lamb of God! And He proceeds without complaint or murmur, as if they possessed the most undoubted right to seize and to maltreat Him. He is placed before his envious and iniquitous judges. They invoke law and justice, in order to destroy Him, and they call on God to witness the deed. When He asserts his

divinity, He is condemned as a blasphemer. They strike that countenance which forms the delight of the just in heaven. They cover with some vile shred of cloth those eyes which illumine the realms above with the splendour of eternal day. "For the Lamb is the lamp thereof."* They defile Him with spittle; they pluck his sacred hair, and heap dishonour on his venerable and divine head. They deride his infinite wisdom, and ask, "Prophecy unto us." O Lord of glory! why dost Thou submit to this? Judge of the living and the dead, is there no justice for Thee? My soul, this is to afford you a lesson. What pitiful provocations embitter your mind, and fill you with disquietude and pain! Study in this school to be meek.

2 *Scene.* He is led to Pilate. The priests would destroy Him were they not prevented by fear, or perhaps by a desire of deeper vengeance. They deliver Him to the mercy of a pagan. He is led through the crowded streets, now branded as an impostor and a criminal, condemned by the assembled priests and sages of the nation. Thousands that have heard his preaching, and admired Him, thousands that beheld or experienced his stupendous power, must now look on Him in no other light than as an impious impostor detected. What a total privation of character and honour! Oh! proud or vain soul, approach, and then reflect on your petty views and ideas. How painful to Jesus is the lesson which He gives!

3 *Scene.* The tribunal of Pilate. This weak and vacillating judge well knew the innocence of the Lamb of God, and the malice of those who accused Him. He makes some feeble effort to release Him, but temporal interests

* Apoc. xxi. 23.

and the gratification of passion oppose justice, and justice must yield: Jesus must be sacrificed. O my soul! whilst you condemn Pilate, remember how often you have vacillated between duty and indulgence, God and pleasure, and how often God has been abandoned and outraged. The meek Redeemer makes merely such replies as truth and prudence require, and neither human respect, nor love of life, nor fear of impending torture, can draw from his lips one superfluous word. And my complaints, when anxiety or pain annoys me, how loud and how incessant are they!

4 *Scene.* He is led away to the court of Herod. Pilate would willingly evade guilt, though he had not fortitude enough entirely to reject it. He sends the Lord of majesty to beg, as it were, for acquittal or condemnation. Herod rejoices to behold the Omnipotent Redeemer. His life or death weighs but little with him, but his curiosity would willingly be amused. But Jesus, who is to shed his blood to save mankind, will not pronounce a word to flatter human passion. Eternal Wisdom is the sport of impious Herod and his court, and paraded in the garment of a fool. Oh, you, whose dim and narrow minds have been illumined with some slender ray of intellect beyond others, learn here the folly of the pride of genius. Learn, too, religious soul, what the world is—the profaner of holy things, the enemy of God and of his Christ. Exult and be grateful that you have escaped it.

5 *Scene.* He is condemned to be scourged. It is not the voice of Pilate which really condemns the Redeemer—it is that eternal decree pronounced above: his eternal Father will not listen to mercy, because our sins cry,

“Crucify Him.” “He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows.”* “For the crime of my people have I struck Him.”†

Colloquy to our suffering Redeemer—O Lord of majesty and glory, before whom on thy eternal throne the choirs of angels adore and veil their faces in awe, what insults, what outrages dost Thou endure before the iniquitous priests, their menials, and the miserable scum of the Jewish people! Judge of the living and the dead, what injustice dost Thou suffer from them! Thou who art beauty, holiness, and glory by essence, art treated with more indignity than the vilest slave, calumniated, blasphemed, and condemned as an impudent impostor. To increase thy ignominy and prepare Thee for a death of more extreme torture, Thou art sent to the tribunal of the pagan Pilate and dragged through the crowded streets, exposed to the contempt, the scorn, and insults of the rabble. Truly “Thou art filled with reproaches,”‡ according to the words of the prophet. In thy years of laborious preaching Thou didst “go around doing good to all,”§ and thy touch or word gave health, life, and benediction. Thou art now paraded in mockery: all who served and adored Thee are called on to insult and persecute Thee, and repay thy benefits with injury and contempt. Pilate easily discovered thy innocence, but he held Thee in too much contempt to take the trouble of defending it. Herod despised thy infinite wisdom: it is not the wisdom of this world, so vaunted by men; he resented thy refusal to gratify his curiosity by the exertion of thy infinite power, and he mocks Thee as a fool or a lunatic. Pilate considers

* Isai. liii. 4. † Ib. liii. 8. ‡ Lamen. iii. 30. § Acts, x. 38.

it an act of mercy to save thy life at the expense of torture, and orders Thee to be scourged. Such is the treatment Thou dost endure from those to bless and redeem whom Thou didst descend from thy throne of glory above, and from that hour Thou hast ever continued to receive similar insults from the generality of mankind. Never have they ceased to commit those crimes for which Thou didst endure such contempt and ignominy. Thou hast been, O Lord ! the victim of human passion, a scandal to the Jew, and an object of contempt to the Gentile. In these scenes of thy passion Thou hast taught us to avoid vain human glory. Let not a lesson that cost Thee so dear, O Lord ! be fruitless to us. Grant us to feel the hollowness, the vanity, the destructive effects of love of admiration : give us a horror of its injustice to Thee and thy Eternal Father, to whom all glory is due. Let us seek thy approbation alone on earth : our true glory is to participate in that which Thou dost confer on the elect in heaven. "Soul of Christ," &c.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—With what bitter sorrow must thy paternal heart have been pierced at beholding the cruel treatment of thy only-begotten Son at the hands of those ungrateful children, to redeem whom Thou hast sent Him from the kingdom of his glory, where He reigns with Thee in undivided majesty and splendour. When Thou didst feel compelled to purify the enormous iniquity of the human race by the universal deluge Thou didst declare by the prophet that thy heart was penetrated with internal sorrow for having created sinful men, how far more enormous and detestable must their ingratitude appear towards Thee and thy Divine Son when Thou dost witness the con-

tempt and cruelty with which they repay his wondrous mercy and thine ! How blinded are thy chosen people by their passions and their love of this world ! and how deluded have been the great mass of the human race in all ages that they would not recognize and acknowledge thy benignity and mercy in sending thy Divine Son to redeem them ! We may suppose Thee to appeal to them in the words of the Church. O my people ! what have I done, or in what have I offended you ? I have created you to share my own felicity and glory hereafter, and you have rebelled against me, and united with my foul enemies to offend and dishonour me : you have worshipped them that seek your eternal perdition and torments ; and you have rejected me, your Creator, your Father, and your God. When you were thus lost and ruined I have sent my Divine Son to redeem you, and you treat Him with scorn ; you hate and persecute Him and reject the salvation which He offers ; you prefer the foulness of sin and doom yourselves for eternity. Turn and be converted, oh ! deluded children of men : “ why will you die, O house of Israel ? ”* O Eternal Father ! let not me nor any soul called, as religious are, to thy special service and wondrous friendship and love, be deaf to thy paternal words. Let us feel and acknowledge thy infinite mercy and benignity, and devote ourselves to Thee with our whole hearts. Let us despise all human reputation and esteem, and seek that true glory alone which is merited by fidelity to Thee. “ Our Father,” &c.

NOTE.—It is recommended again on this day to read the practical consideration for the subject of the examen of the interior.

* Ezek. xviii. 31.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Pillar and Crown of Thorns.

1 *Scene.* Jesus is bound to the pillar and scourged.

2 *Scene.* He is crowned with thorns.

3 *Scene.* Pilate exhibits Him to the people, saying:
“Behold the man.”

Preparatory prayer: “My God,” &c.

1 *Prelude.* Contemplate your Redeemer brought forth by Pilate with the blood-stained robe and thorny crown.

2 *Prelude.* Beg a great horror of sin—the cause of your Redeemer’s torture.

1 *Scene.* All that we have contemplated has been but the preparation, and now commences the torture of the Victim of human crime and divine, inexorable justice. How cruel is this first scene! He that clothes all nature with beauty is disrobed! Those hands that are opened “to fill all creatures with benediction” are bound in ruthless bands to the pillar; ferocious pagan soldiers, inspired with the cruelty of demons, bare their nervous arms and raise the knotty scourges, the rods, and chains of iron. At once the spotless flesh of the Redeemer is rent with gaping wounds; the whitening bones appear through their torn covering; the blood of the immaculate Lamb flows in precious streams, and bedews the walls, the ground, and the persons of his torturers, until his body becomes one red and burning wound. “From the sole of his foot to the summit of his head there is no soundness in Him.”* O sensual soul! approach and view your work; your criminal enjoyments

* Isai. i. 6.

have armed those hands that thus have rent the virgin flesh of the Lord Jesus. Behold how you have heaped on Him wound on wound by your excesses so often repeated. Yes, "for our sins He was wounded." And you, O follower of Jesus ! are you to waste your life in ease and softness ? Ah ! if you truly love Jesus, compassionate Him ; be content to deny yourself and to suffer with Him.

2 *Scene*. He is crowned with thorns. The Redeemer has been tortured until the human form has been disfigured, almost obliterated. He appears "as a worm and no man."* Yet malice is not satiated. His wounds and sufferings must be made matters for sport and scorn. He is covered with a garment of faded purple, and seated on a broken pillar ; the soldiers assemble as to a pastime ;—how cruel a pastime to Jesus ! They plait a crown of ruthless thorns and press them deeply into his sacred head. They place in his hand the sceptre of a reed, and, kneeling in mockery, they salute Him, "King of the Jews." Stand by, O proud, rebellious heart, and view the Lord of glory. Behold his head that wears the crown of infinite splendour ; behold it now a head of ignominy and torture. Behold that hand that bears the sceptre of the universe now furnished with the emblem of weakness, and made a subject for derision. Such is the crown of agony which you have prepared for your Redeemer, when you called Him "Lord," and yet impiously offended and condemned Him. Such was the sceptre when you refused to obey and rejected his commands. You may have bent the knee, but it was as the knee of the tormentor, in scorn. He was to you the "King of the Jews"—the king of any, but not yours.

* Ps. xxi. 7.

Bow down, O dust! in the presence of this King of dolours; subdue the rebellion of your proud, ambitious heart. Cease to be the votary of human esteem; learn to embrace the humility of the cross; learn to love ignominy and contempt, or call not yourself a follower of Jesus.

3 *Scene*. “Behold the man.” The scene which has passed within the palace of the pretor was too pleasing to cruelty and malice to permit that the Jews should be defrauded of a participation. Jesus is led forth; the drops of blood tremble on his celestial brows, or stream down his livid cheeks. His robes are stained with gore. And his feet appear crimson red, “as of those who tread the wine press.”* And is not this enough? Is there yet torture in reserve? Is not justice satiated, and mankind more than redeemed? No: man is not yet tired of sin, nor is Jesus tired of suffering or of love. The mercy of heaven is reserved on this day for sinful, ungrateful man. For Jesus there is no mercy, nothing but torture and disgrace. How profound! how unsparing! He is compared to Barabbas, and Barabbas is preferred—the guilty and the vile to innocence immaculate, to infinite perfection. And how often have I preferred to God creatures the lowest and most base!

Colloquy to the suffering Redeemer.—O meek Lamb of God and King of dolours! Thou art delivered into the hands of demons in human form, that they may indulge upon Thee to the full their cruel, fiendish sport. “From the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head they have left no soundness in Thee.”† “They have numbered all

* Isai. lxiii. 2.

† Isai. i. 6.

thy bones.”* Alas! they could not thus have wounded Thee were it not thy own will. Thou hast been offered as a victim “because it was thy own will,”† and Thou wert silent as a lamb led to slaughter. Thou wert a self-devoted victim, and Thou didst bear the tortures of the unsparing scourge and thorny crown, to give mankind a horror of those crimes to which they are led by the love of their wretched bodies, by pride and ambition. Sweet to the victims of sin and passion are the draughts of foul, degrading pleasure, but bitter were the wounds by which Thou didst atone for them, and yet more bitter will be the torments of the guilty to which those indulgences lead. O Divine Victim of the sins of men! subdue our hard and flinty hearts with thy omnipotent grace. Let not thy direful sufferings be lost in our regard. If Thou hast sacrificed for us thy adorable blood, teach us to sacrifice for thy love all that is foul, abominable, vain, and destructive to us and hateful to Thee. Teach us to avoid all that is defiling, to love that purity and humility that are pleasing to Thee, and which may merit for us eternal honour, glory, and felicity in thy kingdom of light. “Soul of Christ,” &c.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—O God of infinite holiness! how deadly hateful, how abominable in thy pure eyes, must be the indulgence of those passions of guilty sensuality, pride, and ambition, so generally and to such excess sought by the lovers of this world! How dread were the torments Thou didst allow thy Divine Son to endure to prevent and atone for them! Thy words re-

* Ps. xxi. 18.

† Isai. liii. 7.

corded by the prophet must be true: "For the crime of my people I have struck Him;" and though the dread torments inflicted on Him would appear to have been invented by demons alone, they must have been permitted and sanctioned by Thee. If, then, the tortures allowed by Thee in thy mercy be such with regard to the Victim who is holiness and innocence by essence, how direful must be the avenging fires lighted up by thy justice for the guilty who have refused redemption! O sinners of the earth! behold the effects of your guilty folly in the torments of the Divine Victim who suffers for you. Comprehend at length the odious nature of those criminal appetites to the indulgence of which you are so devoted. Learn the rewards which must await the excesses of the sinful flesh, of pride and ambition. How detestable they should appear, O Lord! to all who are numbered among thy servants! Let thy grace subdue such passions in our hearts, and cause us to love ardently that purity and humility without which we cannot be pleasing to Thee. "Our Father," &c.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION

On the Virtue of Fraternal Charity.

1 *Point.* The excellence of fraternal charity.

2 *Point.* The obstacles to fraternal charity.

3 *Point.* The exercise of fraternal charity.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Point.* The excellence of fraternal charity. Charity is the first and queen of virtues; and this axiom, though

it be chiefly true as it regards the love of our Creator, yet is also true in a secondary sense, as it relates to fraternal charity. Hence our Redeemer has chosen it as his own, his favourite commandment: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."* He has constituted this virtue also the special badge of his true disciples: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."† So ardently did He desire that charity and union should reign among them in the most perfect degree, that He prayed that they might be one, as his eternal Father and He are one. Peace and union, too, formed the precious legacy which He left his disciples at his departure from them—peace with each other, and peace in every bosom. "Peace I leave unto you—my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth do I give to you."‡ How much should religious dread lest this sacred badge of the Redeemer or his benediction should be wanting to them! When we have meditated the words of our Divine Teacher, we cannot be surprised to hear from St. Paul that charity is the fulfilment of the law, nor that the beloved disciple should have confined his instructions to inculcating this virtue. "It is the command of our Lord," he said, "and if it be complied with, it is sufficient."

If we turn our view to religious communities, we must immediately perceive that their peace and happiness depend almost completely on the maintenance of this heavenly virtue. Where it reigns, there reigns also all that happiness that can be hoped for on earth, and where

* John, xv. 12.

† Ibid. xiii. 35.

‡ Ibid. xiv. 27.

it is not to be found, there are discord, discontent, heart-burnings, sin, and unhappiness.

2 Point. The obstacles to fraternal charity. They are various: First, antipathies. As dispositions and habits are as various and dissimilar as the countenances of men, there are but few who are devoid of the seeds of antipathies and aversions; and if self-denial have not suppressed them, they must appear and become baneful to celestial charity. Next come predilections and particular attachments. They are, perhaps, more dangerous than aversions, because less suspected; they strike at the very root of charity, as they are founded on passion, and not on divine love and grace. Thirdly, coldness and indifference to others arising from inordinate self-love. Some persons are so entirely devoted to themselves that they have no affection or care to afford to others. All these obstacles to charity should form the constant subjects of self-examination and mortification; until they be removed, charity cannot flourish in any soul. Lastly must be noticed all the various vices of the tongue, that "universe of evil," as it is termed by St. James. By it is charity most frequently wounded.

3 Point. As charity is the queen of virtues, she will not reside in the heart where many do not dwell. She must have as her handmaids humility, meekness, patience, and self-denial. Those four things mentioned in the book of the "Imitation of Christ,"* which conduce much to peace of mind, tend much also to the perfect observance of charity. Should we always choose the will of

others rather than our own, give others the preference in all things, and take what is lowest and last for ourselves, we should rarely offend against charity. The rules of good breeding teach this to the children of the world to a certain extent. Two principles are very essential for the observance of charity: the first is one of justice. If you find that others annoy you by their defects, you should feel that you, in like manner, annoy them perhaps far more. If you expect indulgence therefore, be indulgent to them. The second is, that no revenge is allowed to the Christian much less to the religious, but to return good for evil; if another, therefore, cause you pain in word or deed, study to make a return of kindness. Thus will you conquer both yourself and them, and merit a splendid crown. Examine—resolve—pray.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Jesus carries his cross.

1 *Scene.* He is loaded with his cross.

2 *Scene.* He falls beneath his cross.

3 *Scene.* He rises and proceeds to Calvary.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude.* Contemplate our Lord loaded with his cross.

2 *Prelude.* Beg for grace to bear your cross and to follow your Redeemer.

1 *Scene.* He is loaded with his cross, and comes forth between two thieves. The body of Jesus is now one reeking wound. The change of his garments has irritated his torn flesh, and on his shoulders thus prepared is laid

his heavy cross. But not the torture of his wounded shoulders, not the weight of his cross causes such torment to his sinking frame as one of your sins. And, oh ! how many are cast upon Him ? God “laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.”* Follow your Redeemer in spirit on his path of agony ; weep for his sufferings, but weep much more for your own miseries and iniquities. Seek Mary in the crowd, and follow with her the gory footsteps of her Son. The thieves precede Him to Calvary. Oh ! here lay down and trample on all your pride, your self-esteem, your vanity. Contemplate infinite sanctity and infinite majesty condemned to torture, and doomed with the unjust to an ignominious death : “ And He was reputed with the wicked.”†

2 *Scene.* He falls beneath his cross. Jesus proceeds on his painful way to death, until at length exhausted nature yields, and He falls on the ground, half-crushed beneath the ponderous cross. O stupendous mystery ! Omnipotence is fallen ! The Divine Jesus, who called upon “all who labour and are burdened,” promising that He will refresh them, He is fallen, surrounded by his enemies ! And are there none to afford Him relief ? Behold your Redeemer on the ground ! What does your affection suggest ? Will you not assist Him ? Why is it that now He seems abandoned by that aid which has hitherto sustained Him ? Is it not that He may prove his followers’ love, that He may know who are willing to participate in his cross. Bring to mind your trials that seem to you so grievous. Compare them with the cross of your Redeemer, and know how little reason you have to complain. He

* Isai. liii. 6.

† Mark, xv. 28.

carries his load without a murmur till He sinks. You, who are guilty, who have merited infinitely more, complain whilst you bear yours, and would willingly lay it down. But if you love Jesus, you will love his cross, because you cannot love Him without imitating Him. What was the commendation bestowed on his disciples: "You are they who have remained with me in my trials."† Do you desire to afford pleasure to the loving Heart of Jesus? You must not fly from his cross.

3 *Scene.* He rises and proceeds to Calvary. The Redeemer is not permitted long to breathe. With stripes He is urged to rise by his tormentors, eager to complete their cruel purpose. He commences again his painful journey, marking the way with his blood. Simon of Cyrene assists Him. Happy man to carry the cross of Jesus even by compulsion! It is difficult only to our timorous apprehensions: when we assume it with courage we find that it is the yoke of the Redeemer, which He has pronounced to be sweet. The company of Jesus makes it so. He now approaches Calvary. He labours up the rugged ascent prepared to seal his sacrifice for his Father's glory and for man's salvation. His pain, his fatigue, are redoubled, but his love for me is still the same; so let my love for Him remain constant to the end.

Colloquy to the ever Blessed Virgin.—O Mother of Mercy and sorrowing Queen of Dolours! who shall conceive thy agony in meeting thy Divine Son on his way to Calvary, fainting under the burden of his cross? You can scarce recognise his celestial countenance, now livid, bruised, and

* Luke, xxii. 28.

covered with his blood. You behold now the picture given by the prophet: "There is no beauty in Him nor comeliness:" He looks, as "the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity."* "Why, O my beloved and incomparable Son," you may say, "why is thy apparel red and thy garments like theirs that tread in the wine-press? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the Gentiles there is not one with me."† "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins."‡ He wears a crown, but it is one of thorns; He is the King of Dolours as you are the Queen. But faint not, O sorrowful Mother! you have still a journey of torture to make marked by the blood of your Son. Bear your sorrows meekly and silently as He does his cross: witness the consummation of his sacrifice, and receive from his expiring lips the legacy He is prepared to make to you of the members of his Church for whom He is to die. Oh! bear them in your heart for his love. Look with compassion, O Mother! on the most unworthy of them: obtain for me mercy and pardon for my sins, and grace to persevere in the love and service of your Divine Son to the end. "Hail, holy Queen," &c.

Colloquy to our Redeemer Jesus Christ.—The lesson of imitation that Thou hast given to thy servants, O Lord! in carrying thy cross is one of the most essential imparted in thy life on earth. "How narrow is the gate and straight the way that lead to life, and few there are that find them." This world has been rendered by sin a vale of tears, and those who seek eternal life find the path of this life difficult and

* Isai. liii. 2, 3.

† Ibid. lxiii. 2, 3.

‡ Ibid. liii. 5.

painful. In thy unbounded mercy Thou wouldst teach them how to bear the burden of their sorrows by enduring more than ever could be borne by another. Omnipotent as Thou art, Thou didst allow thyself to fall beneath thy cross, in order to attract the sympathy of those who love Thee. Who can say that He loves Thee, O Lord! and yet refuses to share the burden of thy cross? Give me fortitude to persevere and follow Thee on the way to Calvary for the way of Calvary is the only path to heaven. Let us not faint, let us not tire, on the way, O Lord! nor desert Thee: give us grace to persevere; for "he that shall persevere to the end, he alone shall be saved."* Give me, O Lord! the fortitude of some of thy holy servants, who, when suffering for Thee, have prayed that their suffering might increase: grant me the spirit of that heroic soul who prayed: "Augment my patience, O Lord! but intensify my pain." "Soul of Christ," &c.

* Matt. x. 22.

LECTURE

On Prayer.

PRAYER is usually distinguished as vocal and mental. To both must be referred the words of St. Paul : “ I will pray with the spirit, I will pray also with the understanding : I will sing with the spirit, I will sing also with the understanding.”* If vocal prayer proceed not from the heart and mind it is “ but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.”† Vocal prayer shall be, in the first place, briefly considered in this lecture ; mental prayer, however, as holding a higher place, or being more important with regard to religious persons, shall be spoken of at greater length : it must be observed, at the same time, that the object at present in view is not to write a regular treatise on prayer, but to remark some defects to be avoided, and suggest some improvements which may tend to render the exercise more perfect and more conducive to spiritual progress.

The success of all prayer, whether vocal or mental, depends much on the preparation of mind with which we approach it. It is to be feared that a want of attention to this important point causes the prayers of many to be more a source of disrespect and offence to God than of giving Him glory or of obtaining favours from Him. “ Before prayer prepare thy soul and be not as a man that tempteth God.”‡ These Divine Words require no comment. When

* 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

‡ Eccclus. xviii. 23.

you intend, therefore, to pray in any formal manner and for some space of time, the following brief mode of preparation is much recommended: "My God, I firmly believe that Thou art here present: that thy divine eyes behold me: that in Thee I live and have my being. Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will that I may perform this sacred duty with attention and due devotion."

Vocal Prayer.

St. Ignatius of Loyola teaches and describes two modes of vocal prayer which may occasionally be adopted with great profit when it is necessary to correct a habit of hasty or inconsiderate prayer. The first mode is termed by the saint the second manner of prayer, the first, in his view, being a manner which it does not seem expedient at present to describe. It is in substance as follows:—The words or the members of the sentences of any prayer, such as the "Lord's Prayer," the "Hail Mary," the "Creed," the "Hail, holy Queen," may be repeated and dwelt on mentally as long as they suggest to the mind or cherish any pious sentiment, and when the time for prayer is expired the part remaining unsaid can be pronounced more quickly in the usual manner. This mode may be followed also in repeating a single word or pious ejaculation with very happy effect. We read of a pious person in the early ages of the Church who practised a very peculiar exercise of devotion of this kind, and experienced in it an extraordinary result. She repeated for a considerable time—say an hour—the sacred name of Mary, but at each repetition endeavoured to excite increased devotion. At the commencement she experienced

a taste of sweetness on her palate as if she had taken honey or something similar into her mouth ; as she continued, this sweetness became extended gradually, until at length her entire person seemed to bathe in a sea of heavenly delight. We can imagine that something similar occurred to the soul of St. Francis when he continued for a whole night to repeat the ejaculation : “ My God and my all.” St. Austin was remarked for a similar devotion. The canticle of the Blessed Virgin—the “ Magnificat”—presents an admirable prayer to be recited in this manner by religious, it affords such occasion to cultivate not only gratitude to God for his favours and joy for his perfections and felicity, but also such sentiments of humility and love of poverty—virtues so valuable for religious souls.

The other mode of prayer, named by St. Ignatius the third manner, is somewhat similar to the second, which has been described, but the space of time devoted to the consideration of each word is much shorter. It lasts but the duration of a mere respiration, during which the meaning of the sacred word is pondered and impressed on the soul, which is nourished or refreshed by it. This form of prayer is suitable for those who recite the divine office in choir, and who may prefer this manner to another which shall be suggested in a future page, when there shall be question of the prayer of recollection taught by St. Teresa, who received it from the Divine Spirit.

Mental Prayer.

We turn now to the consideration of mental prayer, of which there are three kinds that present themselves to our

attention: First, the prayer of pure contemplation; secondly, the manner of prayer which St. Ignatius of Loyola terms the exercise of the three powers of the soul—the memory, the understanding, and the will; and, thirdly, the prayer practised and taught by St. Teresa, and sometimes called the “prayer of recollection.”

The prayer of pure contemplation, as it is termed, is not a subject for general instruction. The most eminent masters in spiritual life teach that no person should presume to attempt the practice of it unless the Spirit of God elevates the soul to it by clear and certain indications. In this species of prayer the soul endeavours to contemplate the essence of God or the Divine perfections without any aid from the doctrine of faith, or any of the images presented by the Divine Word. Such contemplation is sometimes termed, as by St. John of the Cross, the “clear night,” sometimes “the silence of all the faculties,” or “transformation of the soul,” or it is indicated by other expressions the meaning of which is not very clear. In the exercise of it the soul is exposed to the danger of being deluded by the enemy, who knows so well how to transform himself into the semblance of an angel of light. An attempt has been made to form a system and lay down rules for this kind of prayer of pure contemplation, but it has been generally condemned and rejected by the most enlightened masters of spiritual life. Such prayer is elevated above the sphere of the action of the human mind: it is entirely supernatural, and can have its origin only in the direct and immediate influence of the Divine Spirit. No one, as has been said, should ever attempt to engage in it unless when led to it by inspiration of an ex-

traordinary kind. It is not, consequently, a subject for present consideration.

The manner of mental prayer, taught principally by St. Ignatius of Loyola, is that which has been most generally approved and practised in the Church, especially in modern times. The holy inventor terms it, as has been said, the exercise of the three powers of the soul. It should, if possible, be a daily exercise, and the first hours of the morning should be devoted to it. Prayer is the food of the soul, and it should be taken at an early hour to invigorate the soul for the labour and combats of the day. God shed the manna in the morning, and our Lord says: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."* The subject should be chosen, read, and impressed on the memory over night, and should be brought to recollection and pondered more or less during any wakeful moments that may occur during the silent hours of darkness. The success of the morning prayer will always much depend on the care which is devoted to this preparation of the mind and soul, and the failure in their prayer of which some have to complain is to be traced in general to the neglect of it. The subject will belong to one or other of the three states of the soul specified by spiritual writers, and which have been known and understood from the earliest days of the Church, even since the time of St. Denis the Areopagite: the purgative state, the illuminative, and the unitive states. The subjects connected with the first or purgative state are those which engender in the soul the

* Deut. viii. 3.

holy fear of God, which is the "beginning of wisdom," horror and hatred of sin, a desire of perfect purity of conscience, a love of self-denial, and a determination to subdue the passions and eradicate every evil and imperfect habit. The subjects which belong to the illuminative state are those which relate to the mysteries of Faith, the incarnation, life, and death of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, and the imitation of his virtues in order to secure the election to eternal life. The subjects peculiar to the unitive state are those which lead to the contemplation of the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, the beatitude of heaven, the perfections of God, and all that can tend to inflame our hearts with his love. All these subjects have been developed in minute detail in the celebrated and invaluable work of Father Cornelius á Lapide, containing meditations for every day in the year, various epitomes of which are circulated in different languages for ordinary use throughout the Church. By the lecture of such books, and the meditation of the subjects specified, the entire body of Christian Faith is impressed on the memory and digested by the intellects of those who are so happy as to habituate themselves to this mode of prayer, and this may be noted as the first advantage arising from its use. It tends to realize in the soul those happy results described by St. Paul, and also in other parts of the Divine Word: "The just man liveth by faith."* By the constant and daily practice of reading and meditating them, all the tenets of faith are deeply and firmly impressed on the memory, the entire soul is impregnated with them, the

* Rom. i. 17.

principles and sentiments become moulded, as it were, or coloured by them; and as the life of the body is sustained by the atmosphere which is respired and the food which is eaten, the life of the soul is maintained by the celestial truths by which it is nurtured and invigorated. By meditation are realized all the magnificent and consoling promises made by God in his infallible word, especially in the inspired psalms of the royal prophet: "Blessed is the man who meditates day and night on the law of our Lord. He shall be like a tree that is planted by the river side, which brings forth its fruit in due season."* "Blessed are they that search his testimonies, that seek Him with their whole heart."† St. Austin says truly, that meditation is the source of all good to the soul. In fact, the entire world gives its sanction to this truth: the foolish and imprudent among men are constantly called thoughtless, inconsiderate, unreflecting; the wise are designated as men of reflection and men of thought. The precious fruits of meditation are described in varied and impressive language by the Divine Spirit: "Blessed are they that search his testimonies."† "Open my eyes, and I will consider the wondrous things of thy law."‡ "Give me understanding, and I will search thy law: and I will keep it with my whole heart."§ It may be said that throughout the entire Psalm 118, consisting of 176 verses, meditation on the Divine Word and law is inculcated with a great and beautiful variety of expression, which demonstrates in the most powerful manner the value and necessity of the practice. The neglect of meditation, on the

* Ps. i. 3. †Ibid. cxviii. 2. ‡ Ibid. cxviii. 18. § Ibid. cxviii. 34.

contrary, is denounced and condemned, and the most severe judgments are threatened to those who neglect it. "Unless thy law had been my meditation, I had then, perhaps, perished in my abjection."* "With desolation is all the land made desolate," says the prophet Jeremias, "because there is none that considereth in the heart."† These inspired words indicate the necessity of profound and earnest meditation.

The very nature of spiritual things and of all that relates to God and to eternity prove the necessity of meditation, and the force of these proofs is confirmed and multiplied by the contrary nature of the sensible and material world in which we dwell, and the seductive attractions of which delude and enchain our senses and affections. The spiritual world and the Creator Himself are invisible, and we can have no knowledge of them except through the mind and intellect. It is only by their means that we can form any idea of the Deity, his divine perfections, his benefits, or the innumerable claims which He has to our love and service. It is only through the mind that we can form any idea of our own origin or final destiny. It is only thus that we can acquire any knowledge of the goods or evils of a future world, or learn by what means we can acquire the former or escape the latter. In the meantime the present visible world and all that surrounds us, forcibly engage our affections and excite our passions, and prevent us from attending to those interests which are infinite and eternal. It is only by reflection and meditation that we can acquire a knowledge of God

* Ps. cxviii. 92.

† Jer. xii. 11.

and of the things of eternity, and thus escape eternal perdition.

The nature, the power, the dread and cruel malice of our spiritual enemies, prove also the necessity of meditation. Those foul, impious, and malignant spirits who, with their chief, are described in the Divine Word, never cease to watch and machinate for our eternal ruin. Their leader is he who is represented by St. Peter as “a roaring lion that goeth about seeking whom he may devour.”* The host of his followers is referred to by the apostle of the Gentiles: “For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood: but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.”† These enemies are spiritual, and are not to be resisted by material arms or corporal strength. The arms which they employ are intellectual, and directed against the powers and faculties of the soul: they are calculated to deceive the understanding to seduce, pervert, and corrupt the will. They are, therefore, to be resisted only by reflection and meditation on the divine truths taught by the revelations of the Spirit of God, which enlighten and fortify the soul. The unsparing lion described by St. Peter is to be resisted by a firm and unyielding faith: “Whom resist you,” he says, “strong in faith:”‡ and faith, in order to continue firm and unshaken, must be fortified by reflection.

The invaluable fruits of meditation should induce every Christian to practise it with ardour and perseverance. Prayer is justly styled the food of the soul, but food,

* 1 Pet. v. 8.

† Ephes. vi. 12.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 9.

in order to promote vigour and maintain life, must be digested. If it be not by this means converted into the substance of the body it only tends to create and afford aliment to disease. It is by meditation and reflection that the soul digests and draws its necessary nutriment from the truths of eternity : without reflection they do not influence our actions ; they are neglected and forgotten, and they render us guilty before God. By meditation we learn to know God, and to adore Him “in spirit and in truth” as He desires. In meditation we “taste and see how sweet is the Lord :” * we find that “He is the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation.” † In meditation is experienced that effect mentioned by David : “My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out.” ‡ It is by meditation that the mind is rendered ardent and resolute, and prepared for difficult enterprises, for evil unhappily as well as for good ; by meditation the soul is steeled against reverses and difficulties, and prepared for unyielding perseverance. It is by meditation on all that regards their various arts and avocations, that men acquire skill and achieve success in all the departments in human life, and, above all, it is by meditation that is excited that unrelenting fervour by which sanctity is to be attained. If you reflect on the means by which the saints gained such victories over themselves and all the obstacles that opposed their progress in spiritual life, you will find that it was principally by meditation on the truths of eternity and all that relates to God and his divine service. By contemplating in the recesses of their souls the beauty of the invisible and future world,

* 1 Pet. ii. 3.

† 2 Cor. i. 3.

‡ Ps. xxxviii. 4.

and calculating the value of its treasures, they learned to despise all visible and sensible things, and to place their hearts and affections where true and real treasures await them. St. Liguori asserts that, "the person who meditates cannot be lost : he will either cease to meditate, or he will save his soul."

In practice, however, a great and very injurious error may be committed, and it is to be feared that it is often incurred. Some minds find a facility in speculation, and they are tempted to dwell too long in the time of prayer on discussions which may be more curious and interesting than practical and conducive to affection and fervour. Persons who allow themselves to be betrayed into this mistaken habit will find that their time is lost, that their reflections evaporate in unproductive thoughts, and that their prayer is devoid of both utility and consolation. It must always be remembered that meditation is but a means to an end more valuable than itself : it is intended to excite desire, or other affections, and to prepare the soul for action. No person takes food merely in order to perceive the taste or flavour without causing it to descend into the stomach as nature intends ; no orator reflects on a subject without proceeding to speak ; no artist contemplates a work without giving effect to his ideas in the material object. Meditation is but empty speculation and a useless indulgence of fancy unless it leads on the soul to affections, colloquies with God, and resolutions. It is always more satisfactory, though perhaps not more profitable, when such affections are inspired by the Divine Spirit, but this effect is not always to be expected. Some souls, in fact, are but rarely favoured with any sensible

movement of the mind, but they are not, on that account, to be discouraged: they are to form in their own minds such acts as the subject is calculated to produce, and as they find profitable to their souls. In doing this their merit will be usually greater, and the divine grace may, under the affections and acts as directed, be even more effectual and more productive of good. Acts of contrition for sin, acts of humility, of hope, and desire, which stimulate the soul to fervent prayer, acts of divine love and affectionate aspirations to a union with God, and others of the most meritorious description, may be said to be in the power of all persons, and when elicited with an effort of the mind and will, without any perceptible movement of the Spirit of God they are more truly our own, and thus may be rendered both more pleasing to Him as well as more productive of good to ourselves. A remark may here be made to be repeated a little later, on that admirable form of prayer called the "Rosary of the Blessed Virgin," and it will throw considerable light on the point in question. The Rosary unites the utilities of both mental and vocal prayer. The various mysteries, the history of which is read at the commencement of each decade, propose the matter for contemplation, and they are pondered during the recital of the "Lord's Prayer" and "Hail Marys." These may be considered as colloquies and acts of virtue expressed in the most perfect form in the words of our Lord, of the Holy Spirit and the Church of God. The recital of the Rosary, therefore, resembles what is termed a *meditation* of the most perfect kind: it is the mental prayer of the illiterate, and not to be surpassed in utility for all persons.

The form of mental prayer which has now been described, and which has been termed by St. Ignatius of Loyola "the exercise of the three powers of the soul," is that which is most generally useful, and consequently most to be recommended. Although it has been reduced by the great saint who has been named to a more systematic form, and propagated to a greater extent in the Church, it is not to be supposed that it was unknown before his time; it may be considered as, in a manner, coeval with the Church itself, as it has been known and practised from the earliest times. It is more particularly useful and necessary for those whose duty it is to instruct others, and who are called, as the first apostles, to "teach all nations," and to "preach the Gospel to every creature." As has been already observed, by meditation on all the entire complex of faith their souls and minds become impregnated with divine truth, and they can speak with little effort the wonderful things of God. In the natural course, however, of causes and effects, a time will arrive in the spiritual lives of many when it will become expedient for them to adopt a change in the manner of making their mental prayer. After many years the truths of faith that they have so constantly read, and the reflections suggested by them, become firmly impressed and, as it were, stereotyped on their memories, so that the necessity of reading them no longer exists. Their progress also in spiritual life has prepared their souls for a species of prayer calculated to lead them to more intimate union with God, and when they have reached this point it would be injurious to them to prevent them from following the usual course marked out by the Divine Spirit. They have

passed through the purgative process of spiritual life, and with the Divine grace purified their souls to a high degree; they have been long engaged in the illuminative way, by meditating on the life and virtues of Jesus Christ, the Model of the elect, and they may prudently prepare their souls to enter into the unitive way whenever it may please the Spirit of God to invite them to it. Many may find themselves assisted in doing this by adopting the manner of prayer taught by God to St. Teresa, and which served to elevate her to such a high degree of sanctity. We are led, therefore, now to speak of her prayer. In a brief quotation from the distinguished Bishop of Meaux, Bossuet, which shall be made later, it will appear that he concurred in the views which have been now stated. Some persons may be inclined to cherish a prejudice against the system of St. Teresa; it is in part a species of contemplation, and they may confound it with that contemplation which is termed pure, and the defects of which have been already noticed. This idea, however, is entirely destitute of foundation, as there exists a radical and essential difference between these two modes of prayer. Pure contemplation rejects all images formed by the imagination, and requires that the mind should apprehend the presence of God by a pure and simple act of Faith, as if the soul were conscious of the presence of a person totally invisible. This peculiarity is indicated by the words employed by mystic writers in describing this manner of prayer when they designate it the "clear night," "the annihilation or silence of the faculties," or by similar expressions. The mode of prayer taught by St. Teresa, on the contrary, essentially requires the exertion of the imagination in the

creation of various images. In the first place, she suggests that a beauteous palace be constructed by the imagination in the interior of the soul for the eternal King of heaven ; our Divine Lord is to be represented in the various stages of his passion or his mortal life. The saints, too, are to be contemplated as present in their proper persons ; and if the essence of God Himself is to be viewed, it is under the image of some material form, as that of a mirror in which all things are seen, even our sins, or of the waters of the ocean in which the soul is immersed as a sponge, or of a diamond of infinite magnitude in which all existing beings are reflected. The fact is, that the prayer of St. Teresa is very nearly identical with that of St. Ignatius in the illuminative way or degree. She had been in the habit of using mental prayer for a considerable time, when the Divine Spirit, as she states, inspired her to adopt her own peculiar form. She had passed through the purgative grade, and her soul had arrived at that stage of spiritual progress which rendered it competent to enter on the illuminative way, and consequently she effectually adopted it. It is clear, however, both from the nature of the prayer itself, as well as from the teaching of the saint, that it is capable of being adapted to any of the three grades of spiritual life, the purgative, the illuminative, or the unitive. It can even be followed in the exercise of vocal prayer, as St. Teresa herself notes. The leading features of this mode of prayer are two. The first is, that it is most favourable to perfect recollection, "because in it the soul collects or gathers together all her powers, and enters into her own interior with God."* "St. Augustine says

* Book of his Lordship, Bishop of Hexham, p. 1.

that he sought God in many places, and found Him at last within himself.”* This corresponds with the words of our Lord: “Lo! the kingdom of God is within you.† “If any one love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and will make our abode with him.”‡ The second peculiar feature is, that it assists the soul in time of prayer by the free use of the imagination in forming images of every kind.

St. Teresa shows that this form of prayer can be adapted to every kind of prayer and every grade of spiritual progress. After having spoken of the “beautiful and delightful dwelling” of the soul’s interior, she continues: “Now, the gate whereby we have to enter this precious dwelling of our souls is prayer and consideration. I do not say mental prayer only, but vocal as well, provided it be accompanied with consideration or attention of the mind; since without this it would not be prayer.”§ Here we have to recur to what has been already said of the recital of the divine office in choir. It is clear that the habit suggested by St. Teresa of entering into our own interior, and there addressing God, represented as present under some sensible form, tends very powerfully to promote perfect recollection of mind and heart. It is clear also that the same may be practised not only in choir, but at all times, and that both attention and fervour would be assisted by it. In fact, it was during the recital of the canonical hours that the saint was favoured with some of the celestial illuminations which she has described with so great advantage to innumerable souls. It will not be

* Book of his Lordship, Bishop of Hexham, p. 2. † Luke, xvii. 21.

‡ John, xiv. 23. § Book of his Lordship, Bishop of Hexham, p. 10.

out of place here to speak briefly of the rosary of the Blessed Virgin, to which allusion has already been made. The system of St. Teresa affords a means for reciting it in the most perfect manner possible. These two forms of prayer correspond admirably with each other, and when combined they mutually contribute to the perfection of both. The contemplation of the sacred mysteries secures adherence to the teaching of Faith, and the interior concentration of the thoughts promotes the highest degree of attention and fervour.

The system of St. Teresa is perfectly adapted to the purgative grade of spiritual life. In that grade the subjects of meditation usually are what are often termed the four last things: death, judgment, the eternal torments which are incurred by the reprobate, and the beatitude of heaven which is lost by sin. These, or similar subjects, cannot be considered in such a manner as to produce the effects in the mind which are desirable, without a variety of those sensible images that belong to the prayer of which we speak; while nothing can tend more to render the impressions sought for, profound and lasting, than the internal concentration of thought. St. Ignatius, whose system of prayer is erroneously supposed by many to be opposed to that of St. Teresa, teaches what he calls the application of the senses in the consideration of eternal and moral truths, for the express purpose of promoting those deep impressions produced by the concentration of thought of St. Teresa. We here observe one point of approximation, if not of perfect identification, in the two systems.

The prayer of St. Teresa principally belongs to the

illuminative way of the spiritual life, as has been already indicated, as it leads the soul to continual habits of internal intercourse with our Divine Lord and Redeemer, and it approximates closely to the unitive to which it tends to lead the mind by that internal concentration of thought which has been noticed. In both these respects it coincides with the system of prayer of St. Ignatius. It coincides with it, or even improves it, in another important feature. In the meditation or contemplation of the scenes presented by the life and passion of the Redeemer St. Ignatius prescribes what he terms "the composition of place," and this is a point which may present a difficulty to the illiterate as well as to persons of dull imagination; St. Teresa suggests that this place should be always the interior of the soul, and she remarks that God is always found more easily there than elsewhere. In fact, as this place is always the same, the habit of seeking and finding God there becomes facile to all descriptions of persons and minds, and by that means all can more easily prepare their souls and secure that steady recollection which is so desirable a disposition for prayer. It is not surprising, therefore, that even among the sons of St. Ignatius in the Society of Jesus many of those most distinguished for their eminence in the exercise of prayer should have been led into the adoption of the system of St. Teresa or a system closely coinciding with it. The first and most celebrated of those who have done so was Father Balthassar Alvarez, one of her confessors or directors, who adopted her mode of prayer. She remarks of him that he far and speedily surpassed others in the perfection of his prayer. He had, for eighteen or twenty years, adhered strictly to the system of St. Ignatius in the

purgative and illuminative manner of prayer, but when once he had learned the system of Teresa he was remarked to advance in spiritual life with very rapid strides. A remark made on the facility acquired in prayer by another Father of the same society seems to prove that he, too, must have been led into a similar mode: in fact, to have adopted the prayer of recollection. This was the celebrated Father Lallemand of the province of Champagne, in France. It is said of him that he called prayer "his felicity on earth." He contemplated in every human soul two things: the image of God and the blood of Jesus Christ. It cost him but a thought to enter into the state of prayer at any moment, so great and constant was his recollection of mind and the pure fountain in which his soul was usually immersed in heavenly delight, as it was with St. Teresa, was the contemplation of the Word of God Incarnate. In effect, as has been already remarked of the two systems of prayer, the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin and that of St. Teresa, the latter and the system of St. Ignatius are nearly or perfectly identical in substance: they blend together in a remarkable manner and their union tends to their mutual perfection in a high degree. The exercise of the three powers of the soul during the first years of spiritual life enlightens the soul with respect to all that regards Faith and impregnates it with the spirit of Faith, while the concentration of the thoughts in the interior and the habit of conversing with God as a Father, a Redeemer, a Brother, a Friend, and a Spouse, lead the soul to that union with the Creator which forms the perfection and ultimate end of all mental prayer. Thus the system of St. Teresa leads to the correction of that defect which is,

unhappily, too usual with those who exercise the form of prayer of St. Ignatius : it secures the constant use of colloquies, affections, petitions, and aspirations. This was a defect which the celebrated missionary, Father Segneri, admits with regard to himself, as is remarked by St. Liguori, and he states that any virtue he possessed was due to the fact of his having corrected that defect and to his having been led to adopt the prayer of petition, which forms one of the results of the system of St. Teresa.

All that has been said regarding the prayer of recollection of St. Teresa is confirmed by the teaching of one of the greatest minds that have in modern times illustrated the Church—the eloquent Bossuet. In a brief rule of life which he drew up for the direction of religious persons he writes as follows :—“ Meditation is good at the commencement of spiritual life, but we should not stop there, as the soul, by the faithful practice of recollection and mortification, usually obtains a much purer and more intimate species of prayer, which may be denominated the prayer of simplicity, consisting in a simple view or affectionate attention to some divine object : whether the Almighty considered in Himself or in some of his perfections, or Jesus Christ in any of the mysteries of his sacred life or any other religious truth.” It is confirmed also by the teaching of St. Ignatius, or, at least, of his followers, when they advise those whom they direct to cultivate great familiarity with God. Bossuet urges that the recollection of mind which the soul acquires in prayer should be maintained at all times and in all the actions of the day. In this also his advice coincides with that of St. Teresa, who writes : “ And even when engaged in these occupations we should often turn our thoughts

within ourselves if it be only for a single moment. The mere act of calling to mind what a companion we have within us is of great importance." The eloquent prelate says that this practice leads to "a dying life;" and if it be adhered to in times of spiritual desolation it realizes what holy David so admirably expresses: "Night shall be my light in my pleasures: but darkness shall not be dark to thee, and night shall be light as the day."* In the expression, "the prayer of simplicity," adopted by Bossuet, is indicated that purity of intention which is so much promoted by the prayer of recollection, by which the soul is led to think of God alone, to love and glorify God alone, to rejoice in Him alone, but it is possible only to those who have learned by self-denial to die to themselves as has been taught.

It has been said in this lecture that the system of prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola in the exercise of the three powers of the soul blends admirably with the prayer of recollection, and it may be useful to give here a brief sketch of a meditation in which this combination is exemplified. Another important utility may be obtained also by this sketch, that alluded to in the lecture on humility, in which it was stated that the practical and unfailing conviction of our own nothingness and tendency to evil is so essential that it should be maintained and, if possible, fortified and increased by daily reflection. The example of St. Francis Borgia, who was a singular model of humility, teaches how this may be done with advantage to our daily mental prayer. It is stated of this admirably fervent saint that

* Ps. cxxxviii. 11, 12.

he daily devoted two hours of the time that he spent in prayer to the consideration of all that could tend to increase his contempt for himself. If he gave so long a space of time to such reflections we may assuredly devote three or five minutes to similar thoughts at the beginning of our prayer. Nothing can tend more effectually to the success of prayer or to prepare the soul better for the divine inspirations, as God is wont to "resist the proud and to give his grace to the humble."* When once the abysses of self-knowledge described in the lecture on humility are impressed on the memory it will not be difficult for the soul to descend each day to their lowest depths, and to cry from thence to God for mercy and grace in the words of the Divine Spirit.

1. Preparation of the soul for prayer :

Concentrate your thoughts within your own interior, and represent to your soul God, or our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, under any form that you find easily practicable, or with which you are familiar. Say: My God, I firmly believe that Thou art here present, that in Thee I live and exist, and that Thou dost behold my heart and all my thoughts. Heaven and earth disappear before thy Majesty, and whither shall I fly from the terrific splendours of thy countenance? I will take refuge in the lowest abyss of my own unworthiness. (You can here briefly ponder.) I am in thy divine presence, O Lord, but as a worm, a grain of dust, or an atom. Of myself I am nothing, and the being received from Thee has been abused by me and made an occasion of sin, an evil infinite as it regards Thee, my Creator. "From the depths I have cried to Thee, O

* 1 Pet. v. 5.

Lord : Lord, hear my voice : let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquities. Wash me yet more from my iniquities, and cleanse me from my sins ; because I know my iniquity and my sin is always before me. In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded. Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed : Thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow.”

2. Here proceed to form the preludes in the usual manner.

3. Ponder the considerations presented under each point according to the ordinary rules, and when the truths meditated have made their due impression, indulge the pious feelings excited, or excite them calmly in your mind, and begin to converse with God regarding them. If your mind be dull, and nothing in particular occurs to you, this very deficiency is a subject to be acknowledged to your Creator, or Redeemer, with great humility and self-reproach. It will afford you an occasion to lay before Him all your necessities, your deficiencies, your temptations, the weakness and desires of your soul, and to implore his mercy and his aid. The same course should be pursued by those who say, that on reading a subject they feel at once impressed, and have the whole truth present to their mind. If this course be adopted there will at once be an end to the complaint made by so many, that they cannot meditate. If necessary even they can employ themselves in pious ejaculations, and their very deficiency and dulness of soul will afford them matter for converse

with God. It is one of those subjects on which we are under the necessity of most frequently appealing to the Divine Mercy and benignity. Lay open to his paternal eyes all your necessities, your miseries, and dangers. His ears will never be closed against your prayer. Remind Him of his promises in the words of David: "I am a beggar and poor: the Lord is careful of me. Thou art my helper and my protector: O Lord, be not slack."* Speak to God, as St. Teresa directs, as a Father, a Redeemer, a Brother, a friend who is interested to an infinite degree in all that regards your welfare, and who never can tire of hearing you. Open your heart with the most perfect confidence to him. He knows perfectly what is salutary for you, and He has the power to bestow it; but this in general He will not do unless you pray for it. He delays to speak to your soul in order to compel you to entreat Him. This is a rule of his divine providence. St. Thomas teaches that the graces destined for us from eternity are given to prayer. How unfortunate are those persons who forget God! They constantly stand in need of friends and benefactors, and seek them often to their utter disappointment, and they will not apply to the universal friend whose delight is to be entreated and to bless, and whose love and generosity cannot be exhausted. But yet, if the hour of desolation and aridity has come for you; if the heavens are enveloped in gloom, and covered, as it were, with a veil of darkness; if your mind seems to be petrified or changed to iron or brass, so that you are inclined to complain with David: "I am become as a beast before Thee;

* Ps. xxxix. 18.

and I am always with Thee,"* do not be discouraged ; you may find that the darkness will be "light as the day." Sit down, as Magdalen, at the feet of our Lord, in spirit, and allow your soul to drink in the celestial influence of his grace and love. In this you may find that it is the "better part," chosen by Mary, and you may be led to say with the prophet: "Thou hast held me by my right hand: and by thy will Thou hast conducted me, and with thy glory Thou hast received me. For what have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away: Thou art the God of my heart and the God that is my portion for ever. For behold, they that go far from Thee shall perish. Thou hast destroyed all those that are disloyal to Thee. But it is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God: that I may declare all thy praises in the gates of the daughters of Sion."†

* Ps. lxxii. 23.

† Ps. lxxii, 24. *usq ad finem.*

Ninth Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Crucifixion of our Lord.

- 1 *Scene.* He is nailed to the cross.
 - 2 *Scene.* He is elevated from the ground.
 - 3 *Scene.* The nature of the crowd who beheld his sufferings and death.
 - 4 *Scene.* The words of Jesus on the cross.
 - 5 *Scene.* He expires, and his Divine Soul enters into the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision.
- Preparatory prayer* : "My God," &c.
- 1 *Prelude.* Call to mind the history.
 - 2 *Prelude.* Represent to your imagination the spectacle of the crucifixion: your Redeemer on his cross—the thieves crucified on either side.
 - 3 *Prelude.* Pray for ardent and devoted love of your Redeemer and profound contrition for your sins.
- 1 *Scene.* Jesus is nailed to the cross. The Redeemer, assisted by Simon of Cyrene in carrying his cross, having reached the hill of Calvary, the direful burden is taken from his shoulder, but only to prepare Him for torments

far more extreme, that were to terminate his life. The cross is laid on the ground; his mantle, that had been caused to adhere strongly to his mangled flesh by the weight of the wood, is rudely torn from his body by the savage executioners, and He is laid supine on the rugged gibbet. His divine hands and feet are applied to the parts marked for them on the wood,—perhaps dragged with violence,—and there fastened with huge nails, driven home with strokes of the ponderous hammer. This cruel operation represents in a lively manner the unsparing and unrelenting iniquity of men, who never cease to give new cause for the torture of Jesus by their oft-repeated sins. Oh! religious penitent, pause here, and call to mind, with profound and bitter remorse, your many sins. Are they as yet at an end? Are the past yet expiated, or is the huge amount still increased by new offences? Oh! say not that they are but venial. Beware of reconciling to your conscience wilful sin, however small it may appear. None can be atoned for without the torture and blood of Jesus. Multiply not, increase not the causes of his suffering; rather say with the prophet: “I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul.”* Oh! shed tears of repentance while He pours forth his blood for you.

This scene presents another lesson to the religious soul: it should render more dear and inviolable the sacred obligations of its vows. The nails which penetrated the hands and feet of the Redeemer are compared to the vows of religion; so that the fervent religious can say:

* Isai. xxxviii. 15.

“with Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me.”* The nail of the right hand may represent the vow of sacred poverty, which prevents the religious from stretching forth his hand either to give or receive, unless when freed by legitimate permission. The nail of the left hand may represent the second vow, as it is nearest to the heart, and may be understood to control its affections and preserve them from all that is inordinate and defiling. The nail which penetrated the feet of the Redeemer resembles the vow of obedience, which prevents all motion unless authorised by the will of the superior. Rejoice, religious soul, in this similitude; love those sacred bonds which render you like to your Divine Model, and consider the security which they give of your predestination to eternal beatitude. Imitate Him in his crucifixion. He could, if He chose, descend from the cross and assert his liberty, but his love for you rendered Him immovable until He was freed by death.

2 Scene. He is elevated from the ground. The tortures inflicted by this elevation would appear to have been the most extreme and cruel torment suffered by the Divine Victim during his entire passion, and it seems impossible that He could have endured it without swooning were He not supported by miraculous power. The entire weight of his body was sustained by the nails alone, which had perforated his hands and feet, and thus suspended He is raised aloft on the cross, the foot of which is allowed to fall into the deep cavity prepared to receive it. What exquisite torment must the shock have caused to every fibre of his frame! Suspended thus, as a victim between heaven

* Gal. ii. 19, 20.

and earth, his wounds and blood plead with the justice of the Creator for the sins of men. The voice of his blood, as St. Paul remarks, speaks better than that of Abel. The blood of Abel cried from the earth for vengeance against his murderer ; that of Jesus pleads for mercy to those who cause his death. The prayer of the tortured Redeemer for the Jews may be applied to all the sinners of the world : “ Father, forgive them : they know not what they do.” Alas ! sinners know but very imperfectly the enormity of their crimes. Even venial sin has a malice in one respect infinite, and yet religious conceal its magnitude from themselves. The blood of Jesus should plead also with sinners, and cause them to cease from their iniquity. How enormous is their guilt in offending their Creator, Benefactor, and loving Parent and Redeemer ! When Jesus had come to the tomb of Lazarus to raise him from the dead He was observed to weep, and the Jews remarked : “ Behold how He loved Him ;” * the divine blood shed by the Redeemer in his passion presents a proof of love of infinite amount. Sinners, cease to offend your Eternal Parent ; He gives for you the blood of his Divine Son : “ behold how He loves you.” Cease to offend your Redeemer who bleeds and suffers and dies for you : “ behold how He loves you.” Above all, religious souls, cease from sin, cease from tepidity ; your Redeemer calls you to be his friends, and brethren, and favourites ; He bleeds and suffers especially for you : “ behold how He loves you.”

3 *Scene.* The words of Jesus on the cross. His first words display his infinite mercy and love : He prays for his enemies, while they insult, deride, and blaspheme Him,

* John, xi. 36.

and persevere without pity or remorse in tormenting Him and prosecuting his murder. He next converts by his omnipotent grace one of the criminals crucified with Him, and promises him eternal felicity: "Amen, I say to thee; this day thou shalt be with me in paradise."* Oh! happy man—happysinner! who hast seized the propitious moment and listened to the call of grace when given; what countless millions neglect to do so, and are lost for ever, though the same price is paid for their redemption! His next words display the example which He would hold out to all his followers, of perfect fidelity in the discharge of every duty, even at the moment of death. He provides a home for his sacred Mother with his beloved disciple, and in his person gives her charge over his entire Church, which is his mystical body. As He in person had been under her care, He commits to her his mystical body: "Woman, behold thy son;" to the disciple He said: "Behold thy mother."† He then cries in the deep anguish of his soul to his Eternal Father: "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me."‡ These words prove the reality of his sufferings, which some impious heretics have denied or doubted. How extreme those sufferings must have been! How complete at that moment was his abandonment! Sold for a paltry bribe by one of his Apostles, deserted by others, denied by the chief, now crucified, reviled, scorned, and laughed at by the priests and rulers of his own people, and on the point of expiring with loss of blood and torture, He finds the face of his celestial Father and the Beatific Vision veiled from Him, and a cry of anguish is forced

* Luke, xxiii. 43.

† John, xix. 26, 27.

‡ Matt. xxvii. 46.

from his lips, which human nature cannot repress. Thus does He teach his servants how to suffer. His last words prove, however, that his cry of anguish indicated but a passing feeling which He desired to manifest ; his expiring words expressed his confidence in his Eternal Father, and his desire as man of the Beatific Vision : “ Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

4 *Scene.* The crowd assembled to witness his execution is formed of various classes. Some have been led to Calvary by mere curiosity to gratify their view by the sight of his tortures and death. Others are his enemies, and have followed Him to indulge their impious hatred and cruelty. Few, very few, are his friends that have come to condole with Him and prove their attachment and their faith. Of course, religious soul, you would be numbered with the last ; but, beware lest your conduct correspond rather with that of the others. Beware of aiding his enemies by multiplying sins ; join not even the first class by cold indifference to his torments and forgetfulness of his love. Examine your own heart.

5 *Scene.* At length the fountain of the Redeemer’s life is well-nigh exhausted. His tortured head, pierced with numberless wounds, remains without support. Oh ! that it could find at the last moment some relief, were it to rest but on a flinty rock ! But, no ; He must endure to the end. That his servants, when the appointed hour shall come, may gently sink into the slumber of the tomb, while angels from above whisper peace to their souls, He hangs on the torturing gibbet, and blasphemies and insults grate on his expiring ears. The end at length is come : He tastes the vinegar and gall applied to his lips, and He ex-

claims: "It is consummated."* Then, to prove that his life was yielded up by his own will, he cried, with a loud voice: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,"† and reclining his divine head on his breast He yielded up his soul. At once his tortures are at an end for ever, and his soul is absorbed in the Beatific Vision, to participate for eternity in the felicity and splendours of the Godhead: a pledge to all who love Him of those bright rewards which He has purchased for them.

Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin.—The hour has come, O sorrowful Mother! and the ominous words of Simeon have been verified: "A sword of sorrow has pierced thy soul;" thy Divine Son has yielded up his spirit and has ceased to live on earth. You stand at the foot of his cross as an immovable rock in the ocean, unshaken by the billows of affliction that heave their waters dark and huge around you. "To what shall I compare thee? or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? to what shall I equal thee that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Sion? for great as the sea is thy destruction, who shall heal thee?"‡ Your beloved and Divine Son hangs suspended on his gibbet between heaven and earth, and you stand at the foot to perform with unyielding fortitude a manifold duty. You concur, in the first place, with the Eternal Father in offering the Divine Victim, of whom you are the human parent, for the redemption of your race; you offer for the same object your own sufferings in union with his, and through them your offering has great value and merit in the sight of heaven. In the last place,

* John, xix. 30.

† Luke, xxiii. 46.

‡ Lam. ii. 13.

you have been constituted by the expiring Redeemer the Mother of his mystical body, the Church, which He bequeathed to you in the person of the beloved disciple, St. John, saying, "Woman, behold thy son;" and again, "Son, behold thy Mother."* O new and wondrous proof of love! In expiring He would not leave us complete orphans: He bequeaths us that Mother whom He loves so divinely, and who had cherished Him with such care on earth. With confidence, therefore, we say to thee: "Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope: to thee do we cry, poor exiled children of Eve." O Mary, Immaculate Virgin and Mother! accept us as your children; abandon us not; allow us not to become the victims of the dread serpent whose head you have crushed. Guard us in life, and when the hour of death arrives, intercede, protect, and secure us from our enemy. Continue the prayer. "Hail, holy Queen," &c.

Colloquy to our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.—O Divine Lord! our Creator and Redeemer, Thou art elevated on thy crimson throne, the cross, between heaven and earth. Thou dost there reign victorious over sin and death and all the powers of evil. "God has reigned from the wood." "It is consummated:" thy work on earth is completed: Thou hast crushed the serpent's head: Thou hast nailed to the cross the handwriting of death that stood against the children of Eve: Thou hast purchased for them with thy blood eternal life: Thou hast reopened for us the kingdom of heaven; and the human race, as redeemed captives, are ransomed and restored to their celestial Parent. All this

* John, xix. 26, 27.

Thou dost proclaim to heaven from thy lofty gibbet. At the same time Thou dost proclaim to the earth and its inhabitants the dread enormity of sin, the mercy and love of thy Eternal Father and thy own, together with the joyful tidings of redemption. O Divine Victim! let not thy sacrifice be vain in my regard; allow me not to persevere in my past perilous course of coldness and tepidity: tepidity cannot secure eternal life, purchased at such a price by Thee! When Thou hast bled and died for my salvation, I cannot hope to gain it without exertion and care. Purify me by that adorable blood which now flows from the cross. Let it descend upon my soul, and let that soul so purified never again become defiled. Oh! enable me by thy grace to say with thy apostle: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross, and I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me."* "Soul of Christ," &c.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—Thou hast declared by thy prophet, O Lord! that thy "tender mercies are over all thy works."† We behold now accomplished a work that is an aggregate of them all: a work that infinitely surpasses that of creation. Thy Divine Son hangs suspended on an ignominious gibbet between heaven and earth, "a stumbling-block to thy chosen people and to the gentiles' foolishness; but unto them that are called . . . Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God,"‡ the greatest manifestation of thy power and wisdom. Thus suspended, thy Divine Son declares to Thee, O Eternal Father! that the work committed to Him is accomplished, thy justice is satisfied, thy glory repaired,

* Gal. ii. 19, 20.

† Ps. cxliv. 9.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

thy honour vindicated, thy enemies are overcome and covered with confusion; mankind are redeemed, and those children loved by Thee with an "everlasting love" are restored to thy paternal bosom. The kingdom of heaven is reopened to them, and that beatitude for which Thou didst form them is secure for those that merit it. The same truths He declares to earth and to men. Thou art now, if possible, more truly than ever their Father. They see the value set upon them by Thee, as Thou hast redeemed them at an infinite cost, the blood of thy only-begotten Son. O celestial Parent! let us not be ungrateful; let none of thy children ever make an unworthy return for such love. Let no man henceforth offend Thee by sin; let none ever repay thy mercy and thy love by offence or dishonour; let all in future be entirely devoted to thy love and service. Alas! Eternal Father, this will not be the case. Much as Thou dost desire it—much as Thou hast done to secure it—the weakness of thy creatures and their tendency to evil will prevent it. But I, at least, and all those who are especially consecrated to thy service—thy priests, all that Thou hast called to be thy friends and favourites—shall not they at least, O Lord! be truly holy, truly devoted to Thee, and indefatigable in thy service? Shall they, shall I, ever again prove ungrateful and forget thy love? Oh! give us grace that it may not be so. Judas, when he beheld his Divine Master seized, could not bear the reproaches of his corrupted heart; what would have been the case could He behold Him lifeless on his cross? Prostrate at the foot of that cross, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, I consecrate myself to Thee anew. Never, O Lord! never

allow me to abandon Thee or offend Thee. "Our Father," &c.

EXAMEN OF THE INTERIOR.

The peace of the soul.

"My peace I leave you, my peace I give you," says the Redeemer. Peace and tranquillity of soul, when taken in its true sense, is a certain mark of the presence of the Holy Ghost, and an essential disposition for advancing in God's service. Do I enjoy this peace? What is the cause of my disquietude? It may arise from one or other of these causes: First, some unmortified passion. Pride, which has been wounded; vanity, which has been disappointed; sensuality, which is deprived of gratification, &c. If such be the cause of my annoyance, it points out to me the object which during this retreat I must labour to remove or correct. Secondly, vain scruples and illusions of the enemy. If this be the source, the remedy is to disclose them and take advice; then resolutely to despise them, and go forward without fear. Thirdly, a trial from God. If this be the case, we must bow down beneath the powerful hand of God. We must implore and weep, but never seek consolation from creatures. If we depend on Him, our celestial Father will support us, and in his own good time pour his consolations into our bosom.

There is here more need for examination than instruction.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Jesus embalmed and laid in the sepulchre.

1 *Point.* Jesus in the sepulchre, dead to the world.

2 *Point.* Jesus in the sepulchre, free from corruption.

3 *Point.* Jesus in the sepulchre, united to God.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude.* Contemplate your Redeemer laid in the sepulchre.

2 *Prelude.* "Pray that, being dead to the world and yourself, you may live for Him who died for you."*

1 *Point.* Jesus laid in the sepulchre is dead to the world. Jesus at length has breathed forth his soul. Approach the cross, where Mary and his few faithful friends have lingered. Behold his sacred Body lowered and laid on the ground. Number those cavities in his adorable Head—how numerous! how deep! How livid his countenance! how cruelly bruised! how rent, how lacerated the sacred veil of his flesh! "They have numbered all my bones."† Behold that opening in his divine side, that wide entrance to his loving Heart. There you may find a refuge in all your pains. Look upon his hands. Behold He says: "I have graven you in my hands."‡ Yes; those cruel nails which rent so widely his sacred flesh, were to sculpture deeply your name in his hands. From all these sources the precious current of his blood poured forth to pay your ransom, till the adorable fountain of his heart was quite exhausted.

* 2 Cor. v. 15.

† Ps. xxi. 18.

‡ Isai. xlix. 16.

My soul, your Redeemer and your Lord is dead ! The Giver of life is dead ! Dead, that I may live ! Dead in torture, that I may live in eternal felicity ! Dead in ignominy, that I may live in eternal glory ! Oh ! where is your gratitude ? Will you not live for Him who died for you ?

In death, religious soul, your Redeemer is still your Model. Follow Him to the tomb, enter with Him there, let the rock be rolled to the mouth to shut out the world, and preserve you in peace with your Lord. Look on the Body of your crucified Redeemer : it is now alike insensible to the joys and pains, the cares and vicissitudes of the world. Friends and enemies are now alike unknown ; it sleeps in peace. Thus should the religious deem himself entombed, dead to the world, its pleasures, its vanities, its sentiments, its maxims, that he may live to God alone. Am I thus dead ?

2 *Point*. Jesus in the sepulchre is free from corruption "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor wilt Thou give thy holy one to see corruption."* Thrice unhappy the religious soul, if, separated from the world, and confined within its sealed and hallowed sepulchre, it be not preserved from corruption. Neither will it then prove the holy one of God, nor will it escape the eternal confinement of hell. And how is the religious to be kept incorrupt ? Study the lesson before you. The Body of Jesus is laid in a new sepulchre, in which no man had ever been laid, free from the defilement of an ordinary tomb. The religious must enter his rest with a pure intention, with singleness

* Ps. xv. 10.

of heart, with God alone in view. The Body of Jesus is embalmed with precious spices, with myrrh and aloes. Without the spirit of compunction and penance, the religious cannot avoid corruption. We carry its elements into our tomb in religion, and without the powerful assistance of God we must moulder, and become in the sight of God objects of abhorrence. If we procure these preservatives, God will lend his almighty aid, and we shall not find in religion the corruption of the world. Again, the sepulchre of Jesus was hewn in the rock, and sealed. Here we are admonished of the impenetrable barrier which we should oppose between our hearts and the world. And the clean, unspotted winding-sheet of the Redeemer reminds us of the purity of body and mind which we should study.

3 *Point.* Jesus in the sepulchre, united to God. The Body of the Redeemer was not by death separated from God. It still remained the Body of that Person who was the Son of God. Nor did his soul suspend its activity for the glory of his Father; it descended to preach to those who were in prison. Those who know not religious life have often supposed it to be the sojourn of indolence and listless sloth. We must be careful to avoid the reproach: the celestial flames of charity must take the place of natural love, and inflame the heart both towards God and man. Thus, though dead to the world, we shall live to God.

Colloquy to the ever Blessed Virgin.—O Mother and Queen of Dolours, can you recognize in the lacerated Victim now lowered from the cross the features of thy Divine, thy incomparable Son, “beauteous in form before the children of men?”* What innumerable wounds!

* Ps. xliv. 3.

“They have numbered all my bones :”* “From the sole of his foot to the top of his head there is no soundness in Him.”† But there is not a wound of them all that thou dost not feel in thy heart. O Virgin Mother, fountain of divine love ! teach me to love and grieve with thee. Fix deeply in my heart the remembrance of his wounds ; never allow me to forget his love. Let me to my last hour ever piously commemorate his sufferings, and let the recollection ever increase my love and devotion to Him : let it be my hope and consolation on the bed of death, and let his wounds secure for me a favourable judgment. “Hail, holy Queen,” &c.

Colloquy to the crucified Redeemer.—O Divine Eternal Lord ! Giver of life, “why is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the wine-press ? I have trodden the wine-press alone.”‡ Yes, merciful Redeemer ! Thou hast taken on thy single soul all the enormous guilt of mankind, and Thou hast washed it away in thy blood. But now thy conflict is over, the victory is won : Thou sleepest in a blissful peace, and soon shalt Thou display the rewards of victory won for thy Sacred Humanity, and for those whom Thou hast redeemed. Enclosed in thy tomb, O Lord ! Thou art still the Model of the religious soul. Thou teachest it that it should be dead to the world as Thou art ; that it should be holy, pure, and free from corruption ; otherwise it can have no share in those rewards which Thou hast won by thy sufferings and death. Thou teachest it also that it should be united to God : if separated from Him no redemption can avail it.

* Ps. xxi. 18.

† Isai. i. 6.

‡ Isai. lxiii. 2, 3.

O Divine Victim, sacrificed in torment for our salvation ! teach us how we may secure for ourselves that eternal rest, felicity, and glory that Thou hast purchased for us by thy blood. Enable us, by thy grace, to extinguish in our hearts all attachment to this world, its riches, its pleasures, and the vain estimation of men ; grant us fortitude to overcome all the foul appetites of sensuality, and to embrace thy cross, the only source of salvation. If we desire to arise with Thee in glory we must be prepared to suffer with Thee. It is by such means alone that we can hope to be found clean of heart and worthy to see and be united to God. “Soul of Christ,” &c.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—When Abraham had prepared to sacrifice his son, O Lord ! at thy desire, and had raised the sword to inflict the fatal wound, Thou didst send an angel from on high to stay his hand, and to command : “Lay not thy hand on the boy . . . now I know that thou fearest God.”* When Jacob had seen, stained with the blood of a kid, the coat of his son Joseph, whom he supposed to have been killed, he “tore his garments in his sorrow, and put on sack-cloth, mourning for his son a long time.”† Thou, O Eternal Father, hast not spared thy only-begotten Son : Thou hast allowed Him to be slain in torment and ignominy, and now Thou dost behold Him lowered from the cross, lacerated with innumerable wounds, and covered with his own divine blood shed for the redemption of ungrateful men. Oh, unspeakable, oh, inconceivable mercy and love for thy creatures ! Oh ! love and mercy possible only in the Heart of a God, a Heart

* Gen. xxii. 12.

† Ibid., xxxvii. 34.

infinitely perfect ! Oh ! how shall men repay such love ? How are they to prove their gratitude ? Are they not in future to prefer death to the smallest offence against Thee ? Will they not devote every moment of their lives to thy service and love ? Alas ! Eternal Father, men are, as they have been in general, the willing dupes of the spirit of evil ; they are weak, corrupt, and, from their very childhood, inclined to evil : they will be ungrateful, and offend Thee to the end. Even among those especially called and chosen by Thee, are found some who are ungrateful and cold in their devotion to Thee. Pardon, O Eternal Father ! pardon my coldness and ingratitude. Now, at least, grant me thy powerful grace, that I may learn to serve Thee with fidelity. Illumine my soul with new light, grant me new fortitude, subdue the hardness of my heart, so attached to self-indulgence. Teach me what it is to love Thee truly and alone : to be as thy true servants and children, and in some respects worthy of thy love and goodness. What, O Lord ! dost Thou wish me to do ? “ My heart is ready, O Lord ! my heart is ready. I will sing and will give praise . . . For thy mercy is great above the heavens.”* “ Our Father,” &c.

* Ps. cvii. 2, 5.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION

On the Spiritual Duties.

Pass each in review :

1. Morning oblation.
2. Meditation.
3. Mass.
4. Examens.
5. Spiritual reading.
6. The divine office, beads, and vocal prayer.

Preparatory prayer : “ My God,” &c.

To maintain corporal vigour, or even life, much less to augment our strength, without the use of necessary sustenance, is a thing impossible. No less impossible is it to advance in virtue, to preserve the life and vigour of the soul, without a due application to spiritual duties, from which the aliment of the soul is derived. It is by attention to them that the precious beatitude promised by our Lord is secured. “ Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.”* Let us endeavour to excite this appetite, and learn how it may be satiated.

Pass each duty in review :

1. Morning oblation. Much of the merit of our days and hours depends on the fervour and purity of intention with which we make our morning oblation. Without intention, the best actions of the day lose a large portion of

* Matt. v. 6.

their value, and the indifferent actions have none ; thus are so many degrees of glory to God and merit to ourselves lost for ever. We may offer our actions, words and thoughts—1, as acts of homage to God ; 2, as acts of love ; 3, as acts of obedience ; 4, some as acts of penance ; 5, as acts of gratitude ; 6, some, too, as acts of humility ; 7, in imitation of Jesus Christ ; 8, with the intention of gaining the indulgences which may be attached to them. Thus will each action partake of the merit of these virtues, and others which the pious soul may add, especially if we recall to mind and renew this offering, even mentally, during the day.

2. Meditation. Do I experience in mental prayer anything similar to the happy effect mentioned by holy David : “In my meditation a fire shall flame out ?” * Why not ? How do I meditate ? Do I attend to the preparation, both remote and immediate ? The remote is no other than recollection of mind and heart, and attention to the presence of God ; the immediate consists in preparing the matter with care, in going to rest with pious thoughts, and eliciting on rising fervent aspirations. A psalm or prayer, repeated from memory, supplies the best. Some pious souls speak aloud while dressing, in order to excite their fervour. Mental prayer depends much on the place and position in which it is made, and on attention to the proper method ; the application of the powers of the soul, and the will in particular. The good purposes should regard chiefly the day which is to follow. How impressive is the fact that the learned Suarez would sacrifice

* Ps. xxxviii. 4.

all his knowledge rather than lose one quarter of an hour of the seven which he daily gave to prayer ?

3. The celebration of, or presence at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. If our faith be true, and rendered ardent by charity and devotion, how fervently shall we celebrate or assist at Mass ! We should never forget that the adorable sacrifice of the Mass is the same and perfectly identical with that of Calvary, and that it should excite in us sentiments similar, as far as possible, to those of the martyred Mother of Jesus, of John and Magdalen, and the other disciples of our Lord. We should remember that it gives infinite glory to the Eternal Father, and that its value in obtaining ineffable favours for the Church, for ourselves, and all mankind, is perfectly infinite. Each priest and religious should carefully seek out in the various beautiful works written on the subject, the method of offering or hearing Mass which seems to them most perfect and most conformable to the character of their own devotion, and scrupulously follow it on every occasion. Any defect in this duty, so eminently divine and worthy of heaven, should be deplored with deep remorse and bitter sorrow.

4. Examen of conscience. St. Ignatius of Loyola considered the examen of conscience in some respects more essential than meditation. Consider, religious soul, how you perform them. How do you make, and what profit do you derive from, the general examen, which resembles that which you make in preparing for confession ? Some complain that the time passes more or less unprofitably, but this will be found to result from one or other of two causes : either that they follow an imperfect method, or that they are guilty of negligence in discharging the

duty. As it is a matter of primary importance in spiritual life, it demands particular attention; and some zealous persons adopt a means to assist their memories which is worthy of imitation. They form an examen of conscience similar to those found in prayer-books. In it they note the faults to which they are liable, and keep it before them. For instance, rising: promptitude, fervent aspirations. Meditation: exact time, recollection, fervour, purposes, and so forth. With this before your eyes, your faults will immediately appear, and thus time will be left for the most essential part of the examen, for exciting sorrow and firm resolutions to amend. This will not be done unless you search for the causes of your faults, and determine to remove them.

4. The particular examen. How many are tempted to undervalue it! and yet it is, perhaps, always the test of our fervour or neglect in other spiritual duties; they are generally neglected in the same proportion as this powerful means of perfection. The method is known. Correct defects. Give half an hour each week to examination of that and other duties, and you will be repaid with the sweets of a good conscience.

5. Spiritual reading. It is of more utility often than meditation. During the spiritual lecture the grace of the Holy Ghost sweetly insinuates itself into the soul that is prepared. The matter should not be sought through curiosity; it should be adapted to the state of the soul. The time, if not appointed, should be well chosen.

6. The Divine Office. Some religious, as are all priests, are bound under grievous sin to the recital of the Divine Office of the Church, and the members of other religious

orders are obliged by their rule under a less rigorous obligation to recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin, or some other vocal prayers. Examine, religious soul, with what degree of perfection and fidelity you discharge your duty in this respect, whatever it may be. It is sufficient, in order to avoid sin, to attend to the pronounciation of the the words, in the spirit of devotion and prayer: but without some other object before the mind to fix its attention and excite some sentiment of piety, it is difficult to avoid distraction for any duration of time. It is, perhaps, even more difficult to follow the constantly varying signification of the words. In order to obviate these difficulties, some adopt the practice followed in the recital of the Rosary, and keep the contemplation of our Lord, or some mystery, before the mind during the recital of the words. A person may imagine himself before the throne of God, and to see the seven spirits that burn at his feet. He may place himself in spirit before the Divine Infant in the Crib at Bethlehem, or kneel at the foot of the cross, and imagine the Divine Blood flowing from the wounds of Jesus; or, finally, bury himself and avoid all distractions in the tomb on Calvary, after the interment of our Lord.

The beads and prayers of devotion to the sacred hearts of our Lord, the Passion, the Blessed Virgin. No fervent religious will either omit them entirely, or fail in the proper attention to them, without remorse and self-reproach. In the recital of the beads it is much to be recommended that the mysteries of the Rosary should be remembered for reflection, and when several unite in the devotion the mysteries should be named at each decade. It may be observed that an important feature in the prayer practised

by St. Teresa, which elevated her soul to such perfection, was the custom of contemplating some mystery, or of keeping our Lord present to her mind in reciting the Divine Office or other vocal prayer.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. *Point.* Jesus Christ rises from the tomb on the third day.

2. *Point.* His resurrection is the pledge and model of that of all the just.

3. *Point.* The glory of his resurrection was merited by suffering : it must be so with us.

Preparatory prayer : "My God," &c.

1. *Prelude.* Call to mind the history of the resurrection.

2. *Prelude.* Imagine you behold our Lord displaying his wounds to St. Thomas.

3. *Prelude.* Pray that being dead to the world and sin you may live to God, and practically understand the wisdom of the cross and suffering.

1. *Point.* Jesus Christ rises glorious from the tomb on the third day. On the afternoon of Friday the body of Jesus was committed to the sepulchre, and Roman soldiers were placed to guard it. There it remained during the next day, which was the Jewish Sabbath. On the following day, which was the first of the week, corresponding with the Christian Sabbath, or Sunday, St. Matthew

relates that a great earthquake occurred at an early hour: "For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven: and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. And his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow. And for fear of him the guards were struck with terror, and became as dead men. And the angel answering, said to the women: fear not you, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid."* During forty days Jesus appeared on different occasions to his disciples, to convince them of the reality of his resurrection, and in order to continue his instructions, which before his crucifixion He had declared incomplete. It is piously believed that his first apparition was to his immaculate Mother, as it was due to her dignity and intense affliction, as well as consistent with his affection and regard for her. The first apparition recorded in the Gospel was to Magdalen, who remained at the sepulchre when the others had retired. The second was to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. He afterwards appeared to the Apostles at table, having entered while the doors were shut, and showed them the wounds of his hands and side. He also said to them: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them, and He said to them: receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."† St. Thomas was not present on this occasion, and refused to believe when the other apostles related the occurrence.

* Matt. xxviii. 2, 3. . . .

† John, xx, 19, 20, 22, 23.

Our Lord, therefore, again appeared after eight days, when Thomas was present, and showed them his sacred wounds, saying: "Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing."* Again our Divine Lord appeared to St. Peter, St. John, and others, on the sea shore, directed them in making the miraculous draught of fishes, and told the chief, St. Peter, that he was henceforth to be a fisher of men. When they had drawn the fishes on shore, Jesus invited them to dine; and they found prepared a fire, with a fish roasting, and bread, which He distributed to them. When they had eaten, our Lord asked St. Peter whether he loved Him more than the others; and, having repeated the question, he received on each occasion the same answer. Jesus again repeats the question a second time. St. Peter was troubled, and replied, with emphasis: "Lord, Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee." After the two first questions, Jesus had said to Peter: "feed my lambs." On the third occasion He said: "feed my sheep;"† and thus He constituted the apostle the chief pastor of his flock, both people and pastors. Meditate profoundly on these wonders. Excite your faith in the resurrection of our Lord; sympathise in the joy of the Apostles, and indulge in all spiritual consolation and delight in your own soul.

2. *Point.* The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pledge and model of that of his followers. He is described by St. Paul as the first-fruits of the dead. "But now Christ is risen . . . the first-fruits of those that sleep."‡ His body after his resurrection was in a glorified state, and so will

* John, xx. 27. † John, xxi. 15-17. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

it remain through an endless eternity. That state supposes four qualities which natural bodies do not possess—1, clarity, or glory, which renders it resplendent as the sun, or rather as an angel; 2, Power, or velocity, by which it can pass instantaneously from heaven to earth, or from one point of the universe to another; 3, subtlety, or spirituality, by which it can penetrate rocks and every species of matter; 4, incorruption, or immortality, by which it is secured against decay for eternity. These qualities will be communicated to the bodies of the just at the last day. “One is the glory of the sun,” says St. Paul, “another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead. It (the body) is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory; it is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power; it is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body.”* “This mortal must put on immortality. . . . and then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy victory? death, where is thy sting?”† Again excite your faith; look forward and contemplate the glory promised to the just, that is all who love and serve God; they shall rise at the last day in a glory and beauty resembling that of the angelic spirits; nay, even of our Divine Lord, the Eternal Son of God. Consider how true are the words: “Neither eye hath seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for those who love Him.”‡ Fear not, then, to take up your cross, and to follow in the footsteps of your Divine King; they alone mark the way to victory.

* 1 Cor. xv. 41-44.

† Ib. xv. 53-55.

‡ Ib. ii. 9..

3 *Point.* The glory of his resurrection was the fruit of suffering, and it must be so with us. Meditate now the mystery of Divine Wisdom implied throughout the entire life of suffering and the passion of our Lord ; it is expressed in the words addressed by Him to his two disciples, on their way to Emmans, after his resurrection : " O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken ! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory ? " * If you inquire why it was that the Redeemer chose for Himself on earth a life so unremittingly marked by humiliation and suffering, and terminated by a death so cruel, so dishonoured, and despised, the answer is, that such was the life and death by which He was decreed to re-enter into the possession of his glory in heaven. If you pursue the inquiry farther, and ask why He should not re-enter into his glory by a path less painful and terrific, the reply is to be sought in his love, and that of his Eternal Father, for mankind, as humiliation and suffering afford the only remedies for the wounds inflicted on the human race by sin. By pride and the indulgence of their inordinate appetites, men are led to evil and perdition ; it is only by humiliation, privation, and affliction they are to be preserved and restored to that state of justice which they have lost, and the rewards of that justice which have been forfeited. To teach men how to suffer and to die, the Lord Jesus became our Leader in suffering and death, and none can hope to share in his glory and felicity that do not to some extent imitate and follow Him in the inflictions

* Luke, xxiv. 25, 26.

He has endured. We shall be acknowledged “as sons and heirs of God: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ; yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.” Such are the words of St. Paul to the Romans; and the Apostle continues: “The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.”* This is the great truth to be learned from the consideration of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. Search out the most prosperous of the children of men that has the means of gratifying all his earthly desires; they will lead him to the fate of the rich glutton, a bed of fire in hell. Seek out then some Lazarus, the most wretched of mortals; let him suffer with Jesus, and he will share his glory. Religious soul, be grateful that you are called to a life of humility and privation. If you love your Divine Leader and Model, understand and love the wisdom of his cross, and beware in religion of the folly and spirit of the world.

Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin.—O heavenly Queen! the dark days of thy sorrow are past for ever. Thy Divine Son has arisen from the tomb, victorious over sin and death and all the powers of evil. He is clothed in his glory, which shall never again be obscured. His crown of thorns is changed into a diadem of uncreated splendour; his lacerated body is clothed in the lustre of the Godhead, and each of his wounds shines with ineffable glory. Rejoice, O Queen of heaven! the endless day of thy joy and glory has dawned. He whom thou hast begotten

* Rom. viii. 17, 18.

lives, never again to be subject to death. We piously believe that He manifested his resurrection in the first place to thee, as thou hadst partaken most deeply of his sorrows. Teach us, O heavenly Queen! to rejoice with Him and Thee; teach us far more how we may deserve to participate in his glory and yours. Teach us the value of the cross; teach us how to suffer so as to merit such consolation. Obtain for us that humility, meekness, and freedom from all defilement that may secure for us a place in the kingdom of thy Son. "Hail, holy Queen," &c.

Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.—O Divine Lord! "Death is swallowed up in victory."* Thou hast conquered sin and death, and all the powers of darkness. Thou hast "put all things under thy feet."† By suffering and dying, Thou hast conquered, and now Thou hast commenced thy reign of glory, which is to endure for ever. Thou art "the first fruits of those that sleep,"‡ and thy resurrection is the type and pledge of that of all thy true followers and the soldiers of the cross. "It was necessary that Christ should suffer and arise from the dead, and thus enter into his glory."§ If we would share thy glory, we must be content also to suffer. But why should we fear to take up the cross which leads to such a crown? We cannot escape the cross in this world, but if animated by thy love, O Lord! we assume it with courage, it will secure to us a share in that glory which Thou hast won by it for our instruction and encouragement. There is no other path to victory and eternal life but that of the cross. O Eternal King of glory! grant

* 1 Cor. xv. 54. † Eph. i. 22. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 20. § Luke, xxiv. 26.

me thy grace and fortify me with thy spirit; have compassion on my weakness and cowardice. Elevate my soul above the grovelling inclinations of flesh and blood; invigorate me with the joy and desire of thy salvation, and “strengthen me with a perfect spirit.”* “Soul of Christ,” &c.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—O Father of mercy and eternal love! Thou hast redeemed and purified the world by the sufferings and death of thy Divine Son; Thou dost now illuminate it with the glory of his resurrection. The reign of sin and death is now at an end. Thou hast conquered thy enemies; Thou hast secured for thy elect that eternal life for which Thou didst create them; Thou hast reopened to them that kingdom which had been closed by sin. Oh! grant to me, and to all who are especially consecrated to Thee, that these advantages may not be lost to us. Allow us not, O heavenly Father! to lose by cowardice, tepidity, or infidelity in thy service, a redemption and glory bought at so dear a price. “Our Father,” &c.

* Ps. l. 14.

Tenth Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 *Point.* The circumstances of the Ascension.

2 *Point.* "Ascending on high, He led captivity captive : He gave gifts to men."*

3 *Point.* We should "seek the things that are above."†
"Our conversation should be in heaven."‡

Preparatory prayer : "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude.* Call to mind the history of the Ascension.

2 *Prelude.* Represent to your mind our Lord ascending into heaven, the disciples in adoration, the angels who appear : hear their words.

3 *Prelude.* Pray that your heart and conversation may be in heaven.

1 *Point.* Our Divine Lord Jesus Christ remaining forty days on earth after his resurrection, appeared on various occasions and in various circumstances to his disciples, amplifying and perfecting the instructions which he had addressed to them before his crucifixion, but which they were not then prepared fully to comprehend. At length

* Eph. iv. 8.

† Col. iii. 1.

‡ Phil. iii. 20.

He led them to Bethania, which lay contiguous to the mountain of Olives, where his passion had commenced; He there gave them his parting benediction, and arose gradually by his own power before their eyes, until He was enveloped in a cloud which concealed Him from their view. He thus ascended to take possession as man of that throne of glory which He had never ceased to occupy as God, on the right hand of his Eternal Father. His triumphant entrance into heaven is described in magnificent language by the royal prophet: "Lift up your gates, O ye princes! and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates! and the King of glory shall enter in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord who is strong and mighty: the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your gates, O ye princes! and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates! and the King of glory shall enter in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory."* Man, before this moment, had been unknown in heaven; now he enters as a conqueror, a mighty King, strong and invincible in battle. He is both God and man. He has overthrown the powers of darkness and evil, and subdued them for ever, and is come to place in his own person on the eternal throne of the Godhead that human nature which the rebel angel had endeavoured to destroy. My soul, endeavour to comprehend the import of the mystery now wrought in heaven. The Eternal Son of God, in mercy towards the race of men, had descended to the lowest possible depth of humiliation. He thus chose to manifest his Divine attributes: his mercy beyond all others; his humility, on

* Ps. xxiii. 7, 8, 9, 10.

which we too rarely reflect; his power, his wisdom, and beneficence. Being essentially and infinitely great, the chief difficulty with Him is to descend, to lower Himself, to lay aside his infinite majesty, and to appear low and insignificant. He therefore not only descends to the abyss of all natural human miseries, but He assumes in the Blessed Eucharist the form of mere lifeless matter. He assumes not merely the form of our dust as man, but that of insensible dust, the lowest form of existent being; and He, the source and essence of all being and Creator of all, approaches to within one degree of nonentity. Having thus lowered, and in appearance almost annihilated Himself, in order to give an example of humility, He elevates that dust which He had assumed to a participation of the throne of the Godhead, and shrouds it in the splendour of uncreated glory. In his Divine Person that dust is to reign in union with God for eternity, so holy are the lowest creatures when united with the Creator. We learn from this how dear we are to God, how closely united, and by how many different bonds; and how deeply He is interested in us, in our conduct, our virtue, and our holiness. We learn also how deeply we are interested in the kingdom of heaven, and how certain is our claim to it if we do not destroy that claim by sin: "And if a son, an heir also through God."* Reflect deeply on all, religious soul, and become penetrated with these elevating, divine, and consoling truths; excite yourself to heavenly joy: "Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart."†

* Gal. iv. 7

Ps. xxxvi. 4.

2 *Point*. "Ascending on high He led captivity captive: He gave gifts to men."* Consider that our Lord did not ascend alone: He was accompanied in his triumphant ascent by the innumerable band of elect souls who had died previously to his resurrection, but who had been detained in limbo in captivity, being excluded from heaven. These were the souls indicated in the inspired words of David, which are reproduced by St. Paul, and which have been quoted from him. They form the trophies won from the powers of darkness. They included, as we may hope, our first parents, pardoned after their sad expulsion from the earthly paradise: Abel, Noe, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and the other ancient prophets; St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, and others innumerable. These souls formed a bright and glorious procession that conducted the victorious Redeemer to the portals of heaven, and summoned the princes of the eternal kingdom to open their gates to the triumphant King of glory. We have to remark here the discrepancy between the inspired words as written by David, and the same when quoted by the Apostle. As written by the prophet they are: "Thou hast received gifts in men."† St. Paul quotes them in another form: "He gave gifts to men."‡ Though apparently so contradictory, they are perfectly true in both cases, and when united they elucidate and confirm each other, and give full expression to the teaching of faith. According to David our Lord received gifts in men, as the souls whom He conducted to heaven were as trophies of victory won by Him and given by his Eternal Father as

* Ephes. iv. 8.

† Ps. lxxvii. 19.

‡ *Supra*.

such. At the same time we are taught by St. Paul that, the graces which accompanied redemption were scattered by Him with an unsparing hand: "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ."* He bestows also on the beatified souls who accompanied Him the treasures of heaven. When we refer these divine words to ourselves we learn that we too were slaves of Satan, that by his humiliations, his sufferings and death, our Lord has redeemed us, restored to us our claim to heaven: and by his ascension He has gone to reign in that bright kingdom as our Leader, our King, and Brother, and to secure our patrimony for us; in our persons, also, He has led captivity captive. Consider how wonderful and extreme is the folly of those who, being so redeemed, so devoted and established in their right to eternal life and glory, lose all and become again victims of the tempter by sin, tepidity, and sloth. Beware, religious soul, of this folly, ingratitude, and insane impiety.

3 *Point*. We should seek the things that are above, our conversation should be in heaven: "Wherefore, if you be risen with Christ seek the things that are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God . . . For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then also shall you appear with Him in glory."† Our Lord Himself had taught "that our hearts should be in heaven" where our treasure is. How perfectly applicable to the religious soul is all this doctrine! If we desire to participate truly in the joys and advantages of the Ascension of Jesus Christ

* Ephes. iv. 7.

† Col. iii. 1, 3, 4.

we must reduce it to practice, and we must live internally with God. He is, indeed, our Father, we must not forget or neglect Him; with Him is our home. Here we are led to realise more clearly all that we have meditated regarding prayer: "Our conversation is in heaven, from which also we look for the Saviour our Lord Jesus Christ."* He has taught us: "The kingdom of God is within you,"† and also that He and his Eternal Father dwell in our souls. "If any man love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him."‡ Here is the consummation of all spirituality, the perfection of spiritual life: it consists in union of heart and mind with God, and familiar intercourse with Him in prayer. To this point must tend, religious soul, all your efforts to purify yourself from sin and all affection to it, from all imperfect habits and inordinate inclinations: thus will you become "clean of heart" and prepared to see God; then you may hope to acquire those virtues in perfection that cluster round perfect charity and unite you with Him.

Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ.—Triumphant Redeemer and Eternal King of glory, Thou hast at length consummated thy victory and assumed as man and God, thy throne and crown of never-ending glory. As God Thou didst reign with thy Eternal Father infinite in essence, infinite in majesty, infinite in might and power: to create an infinitude of worlds was as natural and as easy to Thee as for the bird to fly. Thy difficulty was to descend, to lower thyself to conceal thy greatness and

* Phil. iii. 20.

† Luke, xvii. 21.

‡ John, xiv. 23.

to shroud thy splendour. Yet this Thou hast been pleased to do in assuming the form of man, and clothing thyself in the dust of our lowly nature. Thou even hast descended incomparably lower: Thou hast taken the form of lifeless and insensible dust in the Blessed Eucharist, thus descending to the lowest sphere of existent being, and approaching to within one line from nonentity. But even the dust, when united to Thee, partakes of infinite majesty. Thou hast elevated it in thy divine person, and enthroned it on the right hand of the Father, and with Him and Thee, and the Divine Spirit, it shall be adored for ever: thus hast Thou united the lowest to the highest. How dear must be to Thee, O Lord, the race of men! How true are the inspired words, "My delights were to be with the children of men."* How desirable should it be to me to converse with Thee! How should I love to communicate familiarly with Thee, who art my life and my salvation! Attract my soul to Thee, O Lord, by the bonds of love which are stronger than death! Grant me me the spirit of fervent prayer: let it be my delight to converse with Thee. How dread would be the misfortune to loathe or to avoid thy conversation! Blessed is the soul that loves to converse with Thee. In thy words are life, in thy words are wisdom, knowledge, and peace; in them are found the pledge of eternal joy: "When Christ shall appear who is your life, then also shall you appear with Him in glory."† "Soul of Christ," &c.

Colloquy to the Eternal Father.—O Eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Father, too, and Creator of man-

* Prov. viii. 31.

† Col. iii. 4.

kind, we contemplate with wonder and joy the glory which Thou hast vouchsafed to receive from the victory achieved over sin and death, and all the powers of evil. What jubilee prevailed throughout all the courts of heaven at the triumphant entry of thy Divine Son! With what infinite love didst Thou fulfil those words, "The Lord said to my Lord : sit Thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool."* Thou hast enthroned, in the person of thy Divine Son, at thy right hand the lowly race of man, and at the same time crowned with never-ending glory innumerable individuals of that redeemed race. How wondrous, O Lord! are thy mercy, thy beneficence, and thy love! Thou hast extended thy mercy even to me, the most unworthy of thy fallen creatures. Thou hast forgotten all my iniquities, and Thou dost invite me to intimate intercourse with Thee in prayer. Thou dwellest within me as in a loved abode, and thy ears are ever attentive to my words. O God of infinite mercy and goodness, allow me not to be ungrateful. Purify my sullied and imperfect soul with thy love, as the lips of thy prophet were purified by the angel with fire. Grant me the spirit of prayer; let me love to converse with Thee. Let my heart and conversation be in heaven; vouchsafe to dwell ever in my soul. Let me seek and find in prayer my repose in fatigue, my consolation in pain, anxiety, and sorrow; my strength in weakness and fear, my shield in temptation, my buckler in danger. Happy are they, O Lord! who love to converse with Thee; Thou art their truest friend on earth, as Thou wilt be their eternal reward in heaven. Amen. "Our Father," &c.

* Ps. cix. 1.

EXAMEN OF THE INTERIOR.

On the spirit and exercise of prayer.

“The just man lives by Faith.” Those who would be perfect must “walk before God.” In other words, the religious must live by prayer. Do I aim at this?—do I live by prayer? The sacred duties to which my vocation obliges me are such by which I may gain high rewards or in which I may be lost. Shall I be secure without constant support from prayer? A person of prayer is one who cannot live happily nor go through his ordinary duties without prayer; who in trouble seeks consolation in prayer; in difficulty seeks in it his support; who looks to God for the success of his undertakings, and endeavours to live with God by recollection. Is such my practice? Should it not be? If any in religion have lost themselves eternally, must it not have been through want of the spirit of prayer? What kind of prayer assists me most—mental or vocal? I should chiefly adhere to that. Do I know well how to meditate—to pray? Do I ever seek instruction, or study attentively this science of the saints? Many are the books written on it; if sought for, direction can easily be found. If many distractions assail me in prayer do I indemnify myself by constant recollection during the day, by fervent aspirations, frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament, by thoughts on the Passion of my Redeemer? Am I devout to the ever Blessed Virgin; the saints? Do I dispose myself to prayer and cherish the spirit of prayer by spiritual reading? What is the cause of my distractions in prayer?

Do they arise from any fault of mine—from dissipation of mind? Have I sought remedies? Have I merited consolations; to see God in prayer by self-denial and compunction, which purify the heart? “Give thyself to compunction of heart and thou wilt find devotion.”* Examine—resolve.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Rewards of Eternal Life.

1 *Point.* The beatitude of the body.

2 *Point.* The beatitude of the soul.

3 *Point.* This beatitude is the reward of virtue.

Preparatory prayer: “My God,” &c.

1 *Prelude.* Imagine you behold the Deity on his eternal throne in heaven; the incarnate Redeemer enthroned beside Him; the Blessed Virgin, the angels, and saints in glory.

2 *Prelude.* Pray that you may join that happy company.

1 *Point.* The beatitude of the body or senses. The first idea that we form usually of eternal life is that it is a state of repose and freedom from pain. “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow.”† How happy a state of such sweet rest, were heaven nothing more! A state free from pain, from labour, from fear, from care and anxiety! And thus to repose in the bosom of our Eternal Parent! But to this state of rest is added every natural enjoyment in a manner and degree which now neither eye

* Imit. of Christ.

† Apoc. xxi. 4.

hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive; in a degree which hath no limit but the will of an omnipotent and all-bounteous God. Consider the delights of the senses in detail : of the sight ; the glory, the beauty of heaven, and all its bright inhabitants. Remember the ecstasy of St. Peter on the holy mount : “ Lord, it is good for us to be here.”* 2. The delights of the hearing : the harmony of the angelic choirs. 3. Of the sense of smell : the odours of heaven. 4. Of the taste : that river of delights of which the blessed shall ever drink. “ They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house ; and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure.”† These delights shall be ever new, ever varied, ever secure, ever abundant, and ever overflowing. “ Good measure and pressed down and shaken together and flowing over shall they give into your bosom.”‡ Consider the glory of the beatified body. Like the seed, according to St. Paul, it must be committed to the ground, and corrupt ; but it will arise glorious as the angels, swifter than the lightning ; impassible and immortal. Look around you in this place of exile. What magnificence ! what beauty ! what riches ! And if the Creator has thus adorned a prison and an exile, what shall be the beauty of the kingdom and the mansion ?

2 *Point.* The beatitude of the soul. The beatitude of the body will be great, but it will be inconceivably surpassed by that of the soul, in which happiness chiefly resides. The essential beatitude of heaven consists in the enjoyment of God. In order that his divine perfections

* Matt. xvii. 4.

† Ps. xxxv. 9.

‡ Luke, vi. 38.

may be seen and communicated to the blessed, each will be illumined with the light of glory, in proportion to his merit, and in that light will see God, and by that vision be fused or changed, as it were, into the divine essence. "We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is."* As God is the fountain, the ocean of all good, we shall find in Him all delight to the utmost limit of our desires. That delight will be universal, unceasing, and eternal. It will be universal, pervading every energy of body and soul, and it will still be multiplied by the number of the blessed; for such charity will reign, that each will rejoice for the other as for himself. It will be unceasing, nor night, nor day will it cease; in heaven there is no night; it will be eternal. Call to mind the misery of hell. If God punishes to that extent, what power will He exert to bless and reward?

3 *Point.* This beatitude is the reward of virtue. We were created for heaven, but not to attain it without trial. That eternal kingdom is a birthright, but one which must be secured by merit. "None are crowned unless they strive lawfully."† "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence."‡ Consider how just this is. Men do not reward their servants without service done, and how rigorous are they in exacting it! How eager are men to find a good master, who will be just and bountiful! and when they have found such how cheerfully do they serve him, and how incessantly do they toil! Day after day, as regular as the sun, they repair to their labour, and after having given the day to toil, should necessity demand it,

* 1 John, iii. 2.

† 2 Tim. ii. 5.

‡ Matt. xi. 12.

they prolong their efforts during the night. Men bury themselves in the earth to labour ; they go to distant climes and expose themselves to a thousand dangers for merely a chance of bread ; and shall the servant of God be indolent in labouring for such a kingdom ? Those who have reached it, how little do they estimate their toils ! They now point to their crowns, and hold out their hands to encourage us. Resolve, religious soul, to labour well for heaven.

Colloquy to the adorable Trinity.—Creator of all kings, great source of being, one God in Three Divine Persons ; from eternity Thou hast existed infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thy own perfections : Thou didst need no extraneous addition to thy beatitude, but impelled by thy beneficence Thou didst decree the formation of other beings who might participate in thy felicity and glory : Thou didst become the parent of angels and of men. Millions of both have abused thy favours, repaid Thee with direful ingratitude, and become thy enemies ; but for those who remain faithful to Thee Thou hast prepared mansions in thy glorious dwelling-place, where they are to abide around Thee as children in the house of their Father to an endless eternity. “How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! My “soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.”* What must be the splendour of thy kingdom. O Eternal King ! where Thou dost dwell among thy beatified servants and children. “My people shall dwell,” says the prophet, “in the beauty of peace, in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest.”† That peace is likened to a river : bright, placid, gentle, ever flowing and profound ;

* Ps. lxxxiii. 2.

† Isai. xxxii. 18.

peace with Him who reigns, peace with every loved companion, peace in every bosom. "In the tabernacles of confidence," never can that bright dwelling be invaded by anxiety or fear. If one cloud of solicitude could ever arise to obscure the serene splendour of that blissful region, beatitude would be no more and heaven would not be heaven. "And in wealthy rest." What mind shall imagine, O Lord, the riches of thy royal mansion! St. John, in the Apocalypse, describes the new Jerusalem: "Coming down out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God and the light thereof was as a precious stone . . . as crystal." And the city had twelve gates, each gate a single pearl. . . "but the city itself pure gold, like to glass. And the foundations of the wall were adorned with all manner of precious stones. . . . And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord Almighty is the temple thereof and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the sun. . . For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. And the gates of the city shall not be shut by day; for there shall be no night there."* But in vain are human words and thoughts exhausted to describe the splendour of that kingdom; for "neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for them that love Him."† Heaven, O Lord! is nothing else but thyself; the plenitude of every good, as Thou didst declare to Abraham: "I am thy protector and thy reward exceeding great."‡ Yes, Lord; Thou art as an exhaustless ocean of every good, in which thy beatified servants live immersed for eternity. In that ocean their

* Apoc. xxi. 10. . . . † 1 Cor. ii. 9.

‡ Gen. xv. 1.

desires of felicity are at the same time excited and gratified to endless ages. O Lord ! let me dwell with Thee for ever. "Our Father," &c.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION.

On Perseverance.

- 1 *Point.* The importance of perseverance.
- 2 *Point.* The obstacles which endanger perseverance.
- 3 *Point.* The means by which it is to be secured.

Preparatory Prayer : "My God," &c.

1 *Point.* The importance of perseverance. Salvation depends upon it. "He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved,"* and he alone. To meditate, to weep for our transgressions, to pray, to engage in solitude, and retreat in fine, will not save our souls, unless we persevere. If we go forth from solitude and inconsiderately squander the many graces received, how severe the chastisement which we have to apprehend from God, who never permits his talents to be abused with impunity? Ponder the denunciation of our Redeemer against the soul in the Gospel over which Satan resumes his power: "The last state of that man becomes worse than the first."† It is with relapses of the soul as with those which throw the patient back into corporal maladies. Though the original infirmity in itself may not have been very dangerous, yet, when the disease returns on a frame

* Matt. xxiv. 13.

† Luke, xi. 26.

debilitated and exhausted, not so much from its own violence as from the absence of vigour to oppose it, it often prevails, and ends in final dissolution. How much more reason have I to apprehend a similar effect, who have so much reason to know the danger and malignity of my spiritual maladies? To entertain my present dispositions—an utter horror of sin, however small, a love of purity of heart and mind, an ardent thirst for perfection, a resolution inviolably to adhere to and follow the standard of my Divine Master, an incipient love of his cross: to possess all these sentiments is well, and a subject of great gratitude to God, to whom I owe them. But should I in a short space of time relax in my fervour, grow remiss in the discharge of spiritual duties, lose my relish for prayer, lay aside again the practice of mortification, and recollection, and relapse into tepidity, shall I not have reason to fear all the severity reserved for those who abuse the favours of God? Let this truth remain firmly fixed in my mind: it is “he that shall persevere to the end who shall be saved.”

2. *Point.* The obstacles which endanger perseverance. The first against which I should guard is an insensibility to its importance, and a consequent neglect of the means to secure it. The soul which has not drawn the full portion of fruit from the holy exercises of the retreat, or which sees but imperfectly the danger of its former state, may easily suffer itself to be persuaded by the enemy, that after so much time given to vigilance and prayer, it may indulge, without much danger, in some degree of negligence. It may imagine that it can get on well without the very highest fervour, that it may avoid great sins without aiming at the summit of perfection, that it may enjoy a

certain degree of freedom for its inclinations, and yet be a very good religious. All these suggestions are evidently inspired by the enemy, and, if listened to, must end in all the consequences of relapse. But “be not deceived; God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those shall he reap.”* The rich and inestimable graces of the retreat, while so many millions are left without the knowledge essential to salvation, have not been given in vain. “Unto whom much has been given of him much shall be required.”† We shall be called to an account for every grace. Another error is to content ourselves with vague resolutions, without determining the fixed line of conduct to be pursued. Unless we finally resolve with ourselves on the evil inclinations against which we are to guard, the faults to the correction of which we are to turn our attention, the virtues which we are to study, and the means necessary to be adopted for all this, our perseverance cannot be permanent or salutary. Present impressions will soon fade away, former habits will resume their empire, and the fruits of the retreat will have been dissipated and lost, with the danger of more severe chastisement.

3. *Point.* The means of securing perseverance. How am I to fix my natural instability? How am I to correct my frailty? “I have chosen you,” says the Lord, “and have appointed you that you should bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”‡ You have been granted this retreat that you might bear fruit, and that the fruit might remain. In order to realise this most desirable effect, note down the resolutions formed in the course of it, con-

* Gal. vi. 7, 8.

† Luke, xii. 48.

‡ John, xv. 16.

densed into three or four, with the leading thoughts which most affected you during the meditations, and keep them to be read occasionally, to excite your fervour. These resolutions should regard much, your spiritual duties, especially your particular examen. Resolve to take an hour on Saturdays or Sundays to examine your interior, and once a month to set a day apart as a preparation for death, to renew your fervour. On that day devote an hour to additional mental prayer, and another to a practical consideration. These efforts on your part will merit the aid of heaven, and it will not be denied.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Contemplation to excite divine love in the soul.

- 1 *Point.* The true nature of divine love.
- 2 *Point.* The benefits of God.
- 3 *Point.* The privileges conferred on the soul.
- 4 *Point.* The incessant operation of God for the benefit of man.
- 5 *Point.* The divine perfections reflected from creatures.

6 *Point.* The commandment of divine love reiterated from every object: a colloquy.

Preparatory prayer: "My God," &c.

1 *Prelude.* Imagine that you hear from the lips of our Divine Lord the great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind."*

* Matt. xxii. 37.

2 *Prelude.* Pray for the grace of ardent and faithful love of God

1 *Point.* The true nature of divine love. The love which God demands of us is not that of the Quietists, who imagine that we are expected to be indifferent to our own felicity. It is a filial love, corresponding with the natural desire of felicity that He has given us, and enabling us to reciprocate that paternal affection which He bears towards us. He loves us as a father who desires to be surrounded by his children in his own mansion for eternity, and who delights in the happiness which He confers on them. St. Paul declares that from Him "all paternity in heaven and earth is named."* Moses reminds the people of Israel: "Is not He thy Father that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee?"† And our Lord has taught us to address Him as "Our Father who art in heaven."‡ The divine love according to spiritual writers, manifests itself under a variety of different forms: 1. The love of desire aspires to the enjoyment of God in eternity as the source of beatitude, and thus leads the soul to the end of its creation. God, however, being perfectly conscious that we cannot know or appreciate his beauty or perfections in themselves, accepts our desire of beatitude for the fulfilment of his divine law. 2. The love of estimation, or preference, is essential to the law, as we are required to love God above all other things. 3. By the love of joy or complacency we rejoice in the infinite perfections, in the glory and felicity of the Creator; and this is a form so pleasing to Him, that holy

* Ephes. iii. 15.

† Deut. xxxii. 6.

‡ Matt. vi. 9.

David says: "Delight in the Lord and He will give you the requests of your heart."* 4. The love of adoration is that which inflames the soul of the fervent in prayer and contemplation. 5. The love of zeal is the source of vigour to the apostle in his labours, and inspires all who desire the glory of God and the salvation of souls. 6. The love of condolence is that which creates sorrow for all that is offensive or injurious to God, and opposed to the designs of his mercy and goodness. 7. The love of gratitude arises from the contemplation of his benefits.

2 *Point*. The principal means suggested by spiritualists for acquiring a solid and fervent love of God is to be found in the contemplation of his benefits conferred on us. Consider the benefits, both general and particular, bestowed on you. 1. Creation. From all eternity, while I was nothing, the Creator cast an eye of predilection on me, and decreed to form me, leaving millions of possible creatures who would have glorified Him more in the abyss of nonentity. He created me also for eternal felicity in his own paternal bosom. Am I not forced to exclaim with the prophet, even from the outset: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He has rendered to me?"† 2. Preservation. From the moment of my creation to this hour, the power of God has sustained me, his providence has kept its wings spread over me; each moment I owe Him my existence. 3. Redemption. The sin of our first parents had separated me from my Eternal Father, and rendered me a child of wrath and an object of abomination in his pure eyes. He might have cast me

* Ps. xxxvi. 4.

† Ps. cxv. 12.

off for ever from his favour for the first sin and for my own, but He has not done so. He has given me a Redeemer, his only-begotten Son, and heaped on Him the vengeance which I had merited: "To redeem a slave He has given up his Son." 4. The true Faith. Millions of human beings are born in idolatry and heresy, and they never attain to a knowledge of the truth. I have been favoured and introduced into life in the bosom of the true Church, and from my infancy have lived in the glare of the true light. 5. Vocation to religious life. Millions of souls, far more meritorious than I, have been left in the world, where they are exposed to danger and corruption; I, as a chosen arrow, with the prophet, have been placed in the quiver of our Lord, in religion, where I have more security, and can aspire to a higher glory and reward. Dwell, O religious soul, on these marks of your Creator's love, and as you have been so eminently dear to Him, let Him alone be the object of thy love. Consecrate yourself to Him in the words of St. Ignatius: "Accept, O Lord! my liberty without reserve; my memory, my understanding, my entire will: all that I am, all that I possess, I have received from Thee; to Thee I restore it all, and give it to be ruled entirely by thy will. Thy love, thy grace alone bestow upon me, and I shall be abundantly rich: nothing more do I ask at thy hands."

3 *Point.* The privileges conferred on the individual. All creatures participate more or less fully in the perfections of the Creator. To the elements He has given existence; to vegetable substances He has imparted life; to animals sense; to man intellect. All these benefits, all these emanations of his infinite essence, He has communi-

cated to me. He has, moreover, impressed his Divine resemblance on my soul, as the parent communicates his likeness to his offspring. He has made me his consecrated temple, anointed with the blood of his Divine Son, and constituted me his brother and joint heir with Him. Every celestial grace that I have ever received was his gift, and each has been bought at an infinite price. Oh! how truly favoured I have been! How fervently should I ask: "What shall I render to the Lord for all that He has bestowed on me?" Renew your consecration: "Accept, O Lord! my liberty without reserve . . ."

4 *Point.* God labours for man in his creatures. No creature could exist for a moment without the exertion of almighty power. It is that which gives them vigour and activity, and preserves their order and arrangement, and this for me. It is the universal Parent that sustains me on the earth, and gives it fertility for me; He warms and cherishes me in the sun, and feeds his wondrous lamp to illumine my path. For me the seasons change by the order and the operation of God. I never have received a good, I never have enjoyed the least pleasure or delight, that has not come from the paternal hand of God. The food that I consume, the air that I respire, all proclaim to me the tender affection and care of my celestial Parent. No where can I find a limit to his favours; there should, therefore, be no bounds to my gratitude and love. "Accept, O Lord! . . ."

5 *Point.* The perfections of the Creator, reflected from creatures, challenge our love and admiration. Whatever beauty or excellence we observe in them are but reflections or emanations of the all-perfect Being that has given

them existence; hence the sight of a simple flower has wrapt in ecstasy the soul of a saint. "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands."* The virtues of the just are his gifts. From Him is justice, from Him is beneficence, from Him are clemency and mercy; no virtue exists that is not from Him.

6 *Point.* The commandment of divine love is reiterated from every object: a colloquy. Divine Creator, Thou art essentially love itself, one infinite furnace of love: "God is charity, and he that abideth in charity abideth in God and God in him."† No wonder, then, that thy great command should be to love Thee, in order that all thy creatures, whom Thou dost look on as thy children, should ever be united to Thee. We may consider, O Lord! this thy command to be imprinted on every object that we behold; we may hear it whispered in every breeze. The sun, which is the most perfect visible image of thy glory, proclaims it to the nations as he rolls, illuminating, cherishing, and vivifying all; he reminds them of the life which they have received from Thee, and enforces the divine words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." The earth takes up the words re-echoed from him, as it daily pours forth from its prolific bosom those fruits required for the sustenance of men, and as it provides the never-failing banquet, admonishes all that partake of thy benedictions, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." The ocean, too, reiterates the command, whether man be borne on its yielding bosom whithersoever his necessities impel or pleasure invites him, or whether he stand on the shore

* Ps. xviii. 2.

† 1 John, iv. 16.

to receive the tribute of the mighty waters, those gems engendered in their rocky depths, or those creatures of every flavour and every form, preserved as in a boundless reservoir for the use of man; the words of thy law are ever heard, either in loud thunder, in the storm, or in gentle murmurs on the sandy beach, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." The air that we respire unceasingly repeats the command within our hearts. As it maintains our life, purifies the blood, and communicates refreshment and vigour to every limb and nerve, it sweetly but powerfully urges the precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." If we turn from the physical to the moral world, the command is inculcated with a tenfold force. You may hear it from the bed of the expiring Christian. If his death be happy, and his features be illumined with the hope of a blissful eternity, we demand how we may secure an exit from life equally desirable; the answer is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." If, on the contrary, his death be that of the wicked, and marked by signs of despair and reprobation, we ask again how we may avoid the horrors of such an end; the reply is still the same, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." If we enter some crowded habitation of the dead, and reflect that those whose mortal remains lie mouldering beneath our feet are divided into two classes: that one is destined to dwell with Thee, O Lord! in thy bright kingdom for eternity, but that the other is doomed to endless perdition, we are led to consider how we may secure the happy lot of the former, and escape the dread misfortune of the latter; the same answer still recurs. Thus from the heights of heaven above us, from the abyss of hell beneath, from air,

and earth, and ocean, from all created beings, one loud, one universal, one never-dying voice is heard calling on mankind, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength."* This divine command, religious soul, you are called on to observe in perfection; if the children of the world so often forget it, surely it should not be forgotten by you.

*Mark, xii. 30.











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